

Final Evaluation Report

We ask all grant recipients to complete a project evaluation that helps us to gauge the success of your project. This must be sent in **MS Word and not PDF 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 – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please DO NOT fill in and submit this form until the project has been completed.

Complete the form in English. Note that the information may be edited before posting on our website.

Please email this report to jane@rufford.org.

Your Details	
Full Name	Juno Negi
Project Title	Has wildlife had its fair share of the blame? Untangling the role of wildlife in agriculture-abandonment in Garhwal, Uttarakhand, India.
Application ID	38730-1
Date of this Report	03 May, 2024

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
To determine the role of losses due to wildlife in Agriculture-Abandonment.				We conducted interviews, and discussions across three development blocks of the study district to determine the role of wildlife in crop depredation and farmland abandonment vis-à-vis other factors.
To understand the factors affecting people's implication of wildlife for Agriculture-Abandonment.				Beside the primary questionnaire guided interviews, we also conducted attitude surveys (based on The Theory of Planned Behaviour).

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- a) Provided better understanding of the relative role of wildlife in agriculture abandonment vis-à-vis other social, economic, and political factors.
- b) Yielded important insights for informing biodiversity and livelihood conservation strategies in shared human-wildlife landscapes.
- c) By drawing attention towards other critical factors driving abandonment, the project directed focus on other avenues of innovations with agricultural production, value addition of traditional food crops, exploring horticulture cultivation,

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

The months of July and August of the working year saw incessant rainfall and damage in several areas of the study site, which hindered field work for some time. We resumed our work soon after the weather conditions improved, and the roads cleared up.

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

The main component of the project involved local community participation, and their support. Right from the pilot surveys and exploration to the field interviews and meetings, community members played an important role in the project activities. The questionnaire schedule was finalised with inputs and suggestions from the local community members. The community was interviewed only after obtaining Free, Prior, and Informed Consent. Apart from their active participation in interviews, discussions, and meetings, community people were frequently involved as moderators, and key informants. Several young educated members of the community were recruited as field assistants during the project which added to their experience. Due acknowledgements will be given to such member in future publications and materials as per their contributions, and will also be shared with them. This will likely add to their sense of worth and achievement, and further motivate them to participate in future endeavours like these. Crediting the support and assistance of the local community is the first step towards acknowledging their role in research, which we believe is crucial in building trust among the members, and their future participation.

The project activities were undertaken to understand the community concerns towards increasing agriculture abandonment in the region, and identifying the critical drivers. In doing so, members acknowledged the role of such studies and initiatives in bringing attention to the problems faced by them at the ground level. They opined that inquiries such as these have the potential to pave way for future strategies of action for enhancing agricultural opportunities and mitigating negative impacts of wildlife. Moreover, community members of the socially disadvantaged sections admitted to "getting a chance" of sharing their opinions, and "becoming aware" of many new things after our interviews.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The activities undertaken in this project were conceived as a part of a larger research study focussing on agriculture abandonment and outmigration in the study area. The study will be taken further by the team leader as part of her future research.

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

The findings of the work will be shared with the local community through group meetings and inviting further discussions. Important findings of the study and suggested points of action and recommendation will be shared with the concerned local state offices and departments. We will share the findings of the study in the academic circles by publishing scientific articles, delivering conference presentations etc. Besides, the results will be communicated to the public by means of popular articles and columns in both English, Hindi, and Garhwali, sharing photographic stories etc.

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

This study has lent important insights into the human-wildlife interactions occurring in the backdrop of the larger agriculture abandonment plaguing the study region. Besides, crop depredation by wildlife as a driver of abandonment, we identified a number of other governing factors, foremost being a dwindling *farming community*

due to rampant outmigration. Farming in the hills thrives on the engagement of an entire farming community, rather than a single farming household.

Having explored the critical factors affecting abandonment we feel that the next steps of progression should primarily target villages with medium to high levels of farming where at least 50 percent of the households still have resident youth members. Liaising with the local agriculture and forest department to provide essential and timely agricultural inputs, and means of crop protection has to be undertaken to address the immediate concerns of crop foraging and depredation by wildlife.

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?

As of now, we have only used the Rufford Foundation logo in the consent forms provided to the participants, where we shared our affiliations and support. The logo will be used in all future publications (including reports and articles) and presentations emanating from the work done under this project.

During the course of the project activities, we made an attempt to disclose our affiliations and funding support to the community members. A number of youngsters were curious to know the kind of projects and funding support provided by the Rufford Foundation wherein we shared relevant information with them.

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

Juno Negi (Team Leader)- Project conceptualisation, project design, primary fieldwork and data collection, data analyses, report writing, dissemination.

Rakesh Kumar Maikhuri- Stakeholder liaising

Rashmi Singh Rana- Discussions during project conceptualisation

Prashant Mahajan- Assisting in data analyses and mapping

10. Any other comments?

The funding support from The Rufford Foundation gave us the much-needed financial backing to undertake this study. We are grateful for this opportunity, and look forward to continue our work.

A few photographs from the fieldwork—



A. Entire flanks of abandoned agriculture land are a common sight across villages



B. Long forgotten empty houses like these abound in many villages



C. A woman participant signing the consent form prior to the interview



D. Farmlands turned grazing grounds: Most people now graze their livestock on abandoned farmlands



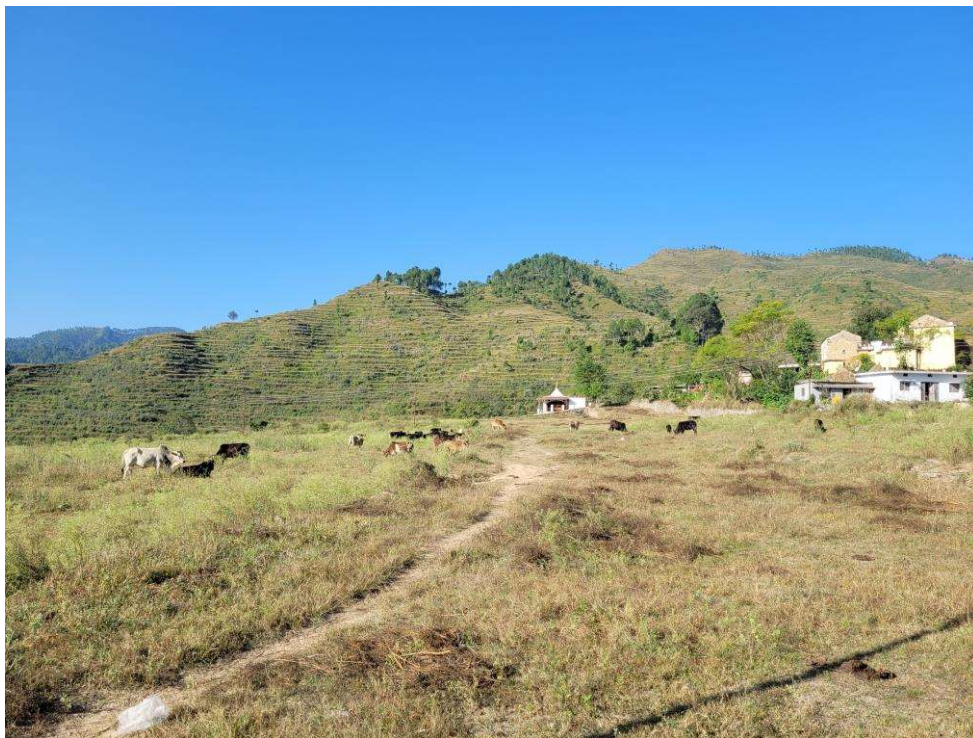
E. Protection walls built under the MGNREGA government scheme to combat crop foraging have been largely unsuccessful in serving the purpose



F. Farming is now mostly restricted to the nearby fields, while faraway lands have been abandoned



- G. Locals highlighted increasing outmigration of people from the villages due to poor living conditions as one of the major challenges to farming in the hills



- H. Gone a-stray: As people move out of the villages, they not just abandon their lands, but their livestock as well, which has caused an increase in the population of stray cattle adding to crop depredation.