Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Donald Romaric Yehouenou Tessi
Project Title	Preserving Benin's Threatened Tree Species and Improving their Conservation Status in the Context of Climate Change: The Case of Pterocarpus erinaceus Poir
Application ID	39562-2
Date of this Report	February 05, 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
Conduct habitat suitability modelling to identify optimal habitats for the species in Benin and highlight important sites for its conservation next to its current range				Thanks to the points collected in the field as well as the data collected on georeferencing platforms, maps of distributions and favourable areas were produced, and examined with various resource persons from forest management in Benin to validate and improve our results.
Establish the nursery of the species for planting activities in suitable areas				During the field phase, the seeds collected from the species were used to set up nursery plots, which were then used to carry out the planting activities.
Educate local communities and stakeholders about the species and its habitats conservation				We carried out awareness raising activities with the managers of the sacred forests, which are marked by the actual presence of the species. Planting was carried out in schools, raising awareness of tree species conservation and warning against illegal felling.

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

a). Location of existing populations of the species and establishment of nurseries using the seeds collected (beginning of the gradual mastery of the nursery).

b). Production of maps showing the distribution of the species on the national territory of Benin, and report on the impact of climate change on the species.

c). Determination of suitable areas for the development of the species to guide reforestation and forest ecosystem enrichment plans.

d). Discussions and awareness-raising with various stakeholders (private and public forest managers, young generations) on the threats to the species and measures to prevent its disappearance from the wild.

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

At the start of the project, the major difficulties lay in locating the remaining populations of the species. Once this had been overcome, there were further delays in collecting the seeds. In fact, as the phenology of the species was out of sync with our data (probably due to the effects of climate change), we experienced a time lag between the actual collection of seeds and our chronogram. We also had low germination rates during the nursery phase, in relation to the quantity of seeds collected in the field. A low quantity of plants was therefore produced. We hope to produce more in the future in response to growing requests from other stakeholders for its planting.

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

Local communities actively participated in seed collection, gaining insights into the species' threatened status and the crucial need for their collaboration in its long-term conservation. Additionally, their involvement extended to awareness-raising initiatives and hands-on participation in planting activities.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, the project is to be continued. At present, planting activities are concentrated exclusively in the southern region of the country. To extend our current results, other relevant localities will be selected to carry out similar activities with greater intensity. Other conservation NGOs have expressed the need for more trees of this species to be planted in protected ecosystems and to promote native tree species in Benin. In the next phase, we will collect more seeds, enrich central and northern forest ecosystems with this species, improve its nursery management and develop a comprehensive guide for documenting seed-based production of the species.

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

Initially, we are in the process of drafting a scientific publication to present our species distribution modelling outcomes and conservation approaches for the species in Benin. Apart from that, several publications relating to the project have been made on the official pages of our NGO.

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

- Project continuation with a focus on expanding planting activities.
- The next phase involves more seed collection, enrichment of central and northern forest ecosystems, improved nursery management, and the development of a comprehensive guide for seed-based production documentation.

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 included on the poster and all the publications we produced for the projects.

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

Donald Romaric Yehouenou Tessi, the project manager, supervised and directed the implemented activities, taking charge of drafting mid-term and final reports.

Kakpo B. Sunday, president of the SOS Biodiversity NGO, helped in the planning and implementation of all project activities. His contribution has been remarkable and relevant to this project, thanks to his contacts and experience in biodiversity conservation in Benin. He has made available to the project active members of our NGO.

Mirabelle Sossah, agricultural engineer responsible for ecological monitoring and biodiversity within the NGO, actively participated in raising community awareness and planting species. Possessing excellent project management skills, she proved to be a valuable asset in the implementation of the project.

Degboe Etienne, department head at SOS Biodiversity NGO, has a background in environmental planning and protection. His significant contributions, akin to Mirabelle's, make him an invaluable asset. As a conservation scientist, he actively engages in fieldwork and effectively communicates with local communities.

10. Any other comments?

I would like to express my gratitude to all the members of the project team for their invaluable technical contributions, which have played an essential role in achieving the project's results. Special thanks go to the SOS Biodiversity NGO for its significant institutional support throughout the various activities.

Finally, my sincere thanks to The Rufford Foundation for its grant, which underlines the importance of the project. Your financial support has been crucial in initiating conservation actions for this endangered species in Benin. With your support, we are committed to continuing biodiversity conservation in Benin, and we hope you will continue to support us. Thank you to everyone who participated in this project.