

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	Elija Kamundi
Project title	Sustainable utilisation and conservation of medicinal plants which are used for treating HIV/AIDS-related infections in Malawi.
RSG reference	44.04.08
Reporting period	August 2008-September 2009
Amount of grant	£5,770
Your email address	elijakam@yahoo.co.uk
Date of this report	3 rd October 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
1. Capacity building for leaders of Village Forest Management Committees (VFMCs), forestry staff and herbalists in medicinal plant inventory, monitoring, and development of quota system.			Fully achieved	Training herbalist in plant inventory was somehow difficult because of their low level of education. A simple monitoring tool was used using simple technique of recourse monitoring and evaluation. It was agreed that herbalist should work hand in hand with forest extension officers when conducting inventories.
2. Establishing nurseries of medicinal plants and in-situ management and ex-situ cultivation in homestead and gardens.			Fully achieved	Propagation of some species of medicinal plants proved to be difficult because it was started in off season for those species. An example is propagation of <i>Pterocarpus angolensis</i> using cutting which was not successful in September 2008.
3. Holding stakeholders workshop for establishing VFMCs and herbalists network		Partially achieved		Full operation of VFMCs require signing wildlife management agreement with Forestry Department and the documents for established committees have not been released by the department. Currently, the committees are operating without legal rights. Herbalist network has not been established. It was discovered that traditional healers in Malawi operate in secret and a network is perceived as one way of violating their intellectual rights. A task force has been formed to look into further sensitization and awareness campaigns.
4. Training in decentralised environmental management policy and acts			Fully achieved	For the first time, communities are able to conduct needs assessment and write micro-project proposals which are will help them to tap funding from District Development Fund. The impact of training on environmental policy and acts is indicated in the authority and confidence that communities have when implementing development projects including all natural recourses management activities.

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

One of the problems was that some herbalists in Malawi have low level of education. It was difficult to put them in one group for training because some of them thought that their secrets on the type of medicines they use will be publicised to their colleagues. This problem was temporarily solved by conducting home based training for hardliners and this was costly. The long term solution is to conduct nationwide awareness campaigns. The extra cost of door to door training was solved by involving community trainers of trainers who live in the same community with the healer who refused to join the group in training. These trainers of trainers were selected from renowned herbalists who are known to have trained many traditional healers in the use of traditional medicine. Another problem encountered was that in-situ management of medicinal plants by replanting in the forest did not produce the targeted results. In total, we planted 150,000 propagules (seedlings and cutting) of different medicinal plants in community forest. However, when we conducted an inventory in August, we discovered that only 25 percent survived. That is within the first 6 months after planting. The low survival rate was linked to unsustainable harvest of the planted seedlings and cuttings and bush fires which destroyed some forests. Communities agreed to strengthen policing of the forest products and many volunteers joined the forest guards. It was agreed that policing will be intensified during the next tree planting season which will start in January 2010.

Another problem encountered was the lack of entrepreneurship skill among users of traditional medicine and other natural resources. It was learnt that traditional healers do not process their medicine and this results in a lot of wastage especially in rainy season. In addition, users do not have proper pricing of the medicine. This increases overexploitation of the medicinal plants. This problem will be addressed by capacity building in entrepreneurship skills in all natural resource based products which are sold locally or abroad.

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

a. Increased critical mass of medicinal plant management team at community and extension staff levels. This project has increased the capacity of leaders of Village Development Committees (VDCs) and extension officers in team building, strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, plant inventory surveys, project identification and environmental micro-project proposal writing. VDC leaders are able to engage the community in all the stages of project cycle. Such information was required during establishment of homestead gardens. The increase in knowledge and skills on management of medicinal plants has enabled communities to start practising sustainable harvest techniques. Initially, herbalists thought that their medicine can only work if the whole plant is destroyed. There was a belief that if someone (a wizard) knows that a certain plant is used as medicine then he can destroy the healing properties of that plant. During training, a brief session on the chemical basis of medicinal plants was taught to participants for them to know how what brings the healing power of plants. This made the participants to agree that the healing power of plants can not be destroyed by witchcraft.

b. Another important outcome was increased number of people practising cultivation of medicinal plants either as single stand gardens or intercropped with arable crops. Initially, communities did not know that it is possible to cultivate some of the wild plants which they harvest in the forests. Herbalists said that cultivation of medicinal plants is giving him hope that he will start practising legally accepted and environmentally friendly traditional healing. He said that harvesting

of plants in the forests is illegal and usually they encounter stiff resistance from forest guards. He also said that the other advantage of having a garden of medicinal plants is that it will reduce the distance he travels to collect medicine.

c. The third outcome is increased data on training needs in management on medicinal plants and other forest non-timber products. The results of training needs assessment show that 99% of the respondents could not establish the link between the declines in biodiversity of medicinal plant other non-timber forest products like forest mushrooms and overexploitation. Further, it was also established that communities lack knowledge and skills in sustainable forest management. The cause of this lack of knowledge was attributed to poor extension service, lack of knowledge on management of forest products among extension officers and weak national policy statements which have no provisions for management of non-timber forest products. This project reviewed that the following issues need to be addressed in order to effectively manage non-timber forest products; 1. There is need to refine forest policy and act to include provisions for management of non-timber forest resources, 2. Management authority should be transferred to communities which are implementing community based forest management activities in customary land, 3. Forest extension officers need to be trained in plant inventory techniques, resource monitoring, setting utilization quotas and techniques for implementing decentralized environmental management rather than focusing on law enforcement, 4. Resource users lack knowledge in entrepreneurship skills in natural resources based products.

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

Communities were fully involved in project implementation. During community sensitization, leaders of VDCs were invited to a workshop where they were briefed on the project activities.

The project was launched in an open air workshop which was attended members from VDCs, Area Development Committee (ADC), chiefs, forest department officials and other interested parties. Figure three shows colourful project launch workshop.

Further communities were involved in all activities up to the level of producing intended results. For activities which require high level of education (like data analysis), young educated members of the community were selected to attend such training. These trained personnel act as trainers of trainers or responsible persons in those specialized skills.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

This project is still continuing since some of the results of the project will take a long time to be realised due to slow growth of indigenous trees. Natural Resources College will be using the established communities as village laboratories for field practical exercises for environmental science students. These practices are assessed as one of the requirement of the diploma course. This presence of trained personnel will enable full transfer of the intended knowledge and skills to the communities.

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

Sharing of the results will be done in two ways. Firstly, the project team will produce project report which will be posted on Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM) which can be accessed by several organisations which are implementing natural resources management activities in Malawi. Further, the team is planning to get funding from other sources for printing training manuals on management of medicinal plant and other non-timber forest products. This manual will be distributed to all the district assemblies in Malawi where they will be reproduced and distributed to different CBOs and VDCs which have established village forests.

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

The RSG grant was used for a period of 10 months from September 2008 to June 2009. The planned cash flow was that funds will be used in 12 months period. Budget expenditures were complicated by the fact that some herbalists refused to be trained in a group. Training individuals at their homes required more resources and time. During the last three months, different project activities were incorporated into Natural Resources Students field and this enabled full completion of the project without extra funding.

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
1. Room rental	356.90	356.90	0.00	Funds spent as planned
2. Lunch for participants	1431.03	1203.33	227.70	A total of 30 participants did not turn out for the different training workshops
3. Per diem for facilitators	527.58	755.28	-227.70	Extra cost was incurred during individual training of herbalists who refused group training. The difference was squared by taking the money intended for lunch for participants.
4. Production of training manuals	137.93	137.93	0	Funds spent according to plan
5. Car hire	465.52	465.52	0	Funds spent according to plan
6. Polyethylene tubes	1379.31	1379.31	0	Funds spent according to plan
7. Garden forks	38.62	38.62	0	Funds spent according to plan
8. Linear strings	103.45	103.45	0	Funds spent according to plan
9. Watering canes	96.55	96.55	0	Funds spent according to plan
10. Hoes	344.83	344.83	0	Funds spent according to plan
11. Shovels	51.72	51.72	0	Funds spent according to plan
12. Seeds	362.07	362.07	0	Funds spent according to plan
13. Transport reimbursement	186.21	186.21	0	Funds spent according to plan

15. Hiring P.A system	120.69	120.69	0	Funds spent according to plan
16. Photocopying	172.41	172.41	0	Funds spent according to plan
TOTAL	5772.41	5770.00	+2.41	

Note the total budget requested from RSG was effectively used.

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

Full handover of the project to the communities has not been done due to low level of education among the local communities in Malawi. The project team is still working with the community in different activities like tree nursery establishment for the next tree planting season. Further, the project team is assisting the communities to prepare micro-project proposals for submission to the district assembly.

After the partial exit, the project team is planning to train forest resource beneficiaries in entrepreneurship skills for all natural based products.

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?

The RSGF logo was used on certificate which was issued after completion of training. RSGF was fully publicised. The media was fully represented during the launch, and participants to training workshops were briefed on the source of funding for the training.

11. Any other comments?

None.