

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. The Final Report must be sent in **word format** and not PDF format or any other 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. 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. Please note that the information may be edited for clarity. 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	Meena Venkataraman
Project title	Assessment of lion-human conflict and attitudes of local communities towards conservation of Asiatic lions in the agro-pastoral landscape outside Gir Protected Area, Gujarat, India.
RSG reference	51.11.09
Reporting period	12 months
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	Meena.venktraman@gmail.com
Date of this report	July 2011

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. Document the magnitude of conflict in different zones including the Gir PA, its adjoining areas outside the PA			Yes	This secondary data was to be provided from the Forest Department records. I was able to request for this data through the project and was sanctioned along with the research permits
2. Assess the current attitudes of the local communities towards lion conservation both within the PA as well as outside the PA			Yes	Successfully completed over 3000 interviews in 91 villages within 5km boundary of Gir PA and between Gir PA and adjoining lion habitats as proposed
3. Propose future conservation initiatives based on the results of this study including strategies for meta-population management and landscape level initiatives.		Yes		Through the project I have collected a lot of useful information for conservation planning through objectives 1 & 2. The information is yet to be collated and processed to propose landscape level management initiatives
4. Develop a human-lion conflict management guidelines manual		Yes		A manual was proposed to suggest better protective measures and husbandry practices. The Forest Department had independently decided to prepare such a manual in 2010. So I was not willing to duplicate such an effort. During the survey, I found villagers unaware of basic information related to lions and the Gir PA. Awareness leads to tolerance and in my opinion that should be the first step for any extension activity. I altered the objective and decided to make a poster to be put up in village school classroom and notice board. This, I felt would be more useful than one-time distribution of a conflict guidelines manual. I am hoping that the

				poster would inspire children and be on display for more number of years in the classrooms.
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2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

Overall, the project went off well and was able to achieve the proposed objectives. There were minor hiccups and irritants that came in way of smooth functioning but things never went out of hand. I did not realise that the proposed field data was massive – collection and compilation was overwhelming.

I had planned to have a researcher stationed in the field to keep up continuous data collection. Unfortunately, I was unable to get a Researcher to remain committed through the project period. As a result, I had to travel more frequently to field, do much of the field data collection and had to recruit and train field assistants and researcher all through the project period.

I had a similar problem with hiring vehicles and had to plan field visits around peak tourist inflow when vehicles were in great demand and the rates were more lucrative than what was offered by the Project.

Due to these problems I could not confine expenditure to proposed budget heads (that was originally calculated @ Rs. 80) and ended up spending more on travel. Another compromise was on the proposed activity schedule - field data collection extended almost till Project end.

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

This Project gives a) Accurate assessment of attitudes and conflict around Gir PA b) Indicates and highlights the actual issue or direction for management intervention c) Has initiated a small campaign for raising awareness in these areas by distributing awareness posters.

This study is the first of its kind around the Gir PA and the corridor habitats between the Gir PA and other lion habitats. Quantifiable data from 91 villages on conflict issues, relation with forest department and knowledge assessment of 3000 individuals through interview schedules have been collected. This will give a very accurate assessment of carnivore conflict issues and attitude of local people towards forest and lion conservation

Any study of human-carnivore relationships is started with a certain degree of prejudice: a) That people are constantly threatened by carnivores and need to be saved; b) Forest department has a negative presence; and c) Future of the animal concerned is threatened. This study was also started on these assumptions and preconceived notions.

Although, all three assumptions may hold true in the long term, in the near future, the conflict in the human-lion interface area around the Gir PA is not threatening. People really saw lions as part of their culture and existence and appeared not grudge them the occasional livestock loss. Livestock compensation schemes of the Forest Department were not very popular. However, the prompt response and action taken to remove or rescue problem causing lions and leopards reassured local people and there was largely a positive feeling for the Forest Department. Crop loss, caused by wild

ungulates was perceived as a greater threat and lead to enormous economic loss each year. Useful interventions to prevent this loss would be more relevant in the present context.

Two Posters were distributed in all the surveyed villages- one for the *panchayat* office and one for middle school (class room/notice board). Many other school teachers and nature education camp teachers also requested for and took the posters for their programmes.

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

The objective of the project was to benefit from understanding human-wildlife interface issues rather than directed at community service. Local people were willing to discuss freely and helped to provide a clear perspective of these issues. In some villages, the villagers got together and organised meetings and put forth their views and demands. This project will therefore be able to act as a bridge of communication between local people and the forest department with rigorous, quantified data.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

This grant was largely utilised for scientific assessment so as to understand problems of local communities. Extension and awareness was a minor outcome of the project. I would like to continue my work in the human-wildlife interface but with greater focus on extension and awareness creation.

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

Forest Department deeply appreciated the need for such a study and was confident enough to allow me to undertake this task. I would be sharing the data and results of this study with the Forest Department. The study will be very useful in conservation planning. I would also be publishing this work in scientific studies for comparative/ similar studies to refer or undertake.

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

The Grant was obtained in April 2010. Obtaining research permits, recruitment of field personnel was proposed in the first 2 months. This target was achieved within this time. Since, Researcher did not stay in the project data collection schedule was affected and was not completed in 7 months as proposed (only 80% was completed) and needed 7 more months to complete including preliminary data analysis and review, field survey and compiling secondary data from forest department. Two months were spent in data transcription (from Gujarati) and data entry. One month to design and distribution of awareness poster in the survey villages. This project has taken 15 months instead of 1 year to complete the project objectives.

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 (Rs)	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
1. Equipment				
1.a GPS with accessories	22000.00	12150.00	9850	Sleeping bags were not purchased as it turned out there was no requirement for it. The difference in the budgeted amount for GPS and sleeping bag was instead used for purchase of printer which was useful for the project.
1.b Printer	2000.00	7800.00		
1.c Sleeping bag	5000.00	5000.00		
1.d Camping gear				
2. Salaries and Stipend				
2.a PI	99000.00	99000.00		
2.b Research Assistant	72000.00	34000.00		
2.c Field Assistant	48000.00	30922.00		
SUB-TOTAL	219000.00	163922.00		
3. Conveyance				
3.a Hired Vehicle (123 days)		1,41,200.00		Four wheel vehicles, bikes and local transport were used in field based on availability, convenience and cost effectiveness. Trip to Ahmedabad city were made to obtain field permissions, poster printing etc. Local transport was used during these trips
3.b Bike Hire		2917.00		
3.c Local Transport		2905.00		
1.1.d Local Transport in Ahmedabad city		1230.00		
SUB-TOTAL	1,68,000.00	1,48,252.00	19748.00	
4. Consumables				
4.a Photocopy (data-sheets)		7056.00		Local village volunteers helped in guiding our survey within each village. They would not accept payment. Their service was acknowledged by offering mementos - caps with Gir-lion logo sold by the forest department in Sasan Gir tourist centre.
4.b Memento		400.00		
4.c Battery for camera/GPS		830.00		
SUB-TOTAL	10000.00	8286.00	1714	
5. Contingency	8000.00	8416.00	-416	This budget head was used on accommodation and food charges in different survey areas by the team and also during trips to Ahmedabad.
6. Report Printing	6000.00	6000.00		This amount is retained and will be used when the project report is finalised

7. Poster preparation	25000.00	13900.00		
Total budgeted calculated @Rs.80 per pound	48000.00			
Total Grant received with value calculated @ Rs. 68.5 per pound market value	409130	410627.00	-1497.00	

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

Attitudes and perceptions are never constant and have to be reassessed and reviewed frequently as they tend to vary according to the magnitude of conflict – in this case, lion/leopard attacks and livestock predation. To identify early and mitigate problems are the important steps for conservation in this landscape.

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?

Yes, for making posters. The posters were distributed among villages and also teachers involved in nature education camps.

11. Any other comments?

I had undertaken this Grant as an individual not opting for collaboration with an institution/Co-PI. Though, I was able to work well independently, I found execution and coordination more challenging as an individual. RSG and Ms. Jane Raymond have been most gracious and understanding and have allowed me the time to complete the project objectives without imposing pressure on me, particularly during the last month of the project.