

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	Arash Ghoddousi
Project title	Persian leopard conservation in Bamu National Park – Iran.
RSG reference	
Reporting period	12 Months
Amount of grant	£4800
Your email address	ghoddousi@plan4land.org
Date of this report	July 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
Awareness-raising at all levels by holding workshops and festivals and disseminating published materials (booklets, posters, calendars) in 7 adjacent villages and cities.		✓		Due to the large number of people living in cities and villages surrounding Bamu National Park, awareness-raising among all people could not be achieved and we tried to have influence on the critical issues and vulnerable areas in this project.
Basic education of local communities for primary means of ecotourism as a sustainable income (by choosing the Persian leopard as a symbol of environmental conservation) in contrast to poaching wildlife in 7 BNP surrounding villages.		✓		Same as the first question but primary means of ecotourism has been established in indigenous people with the first pilot tour of ecotourists we managed during the project and the sustainable income of this industry can make positive impacts in the area in future.
Holding workshops in primary schools of 7 BNP surrounding villages to raise the public youth generation attitude in conservation of natural heritage with emphasis on Persian leopard as an existing flagship species in their region.			✓	By granting another fund for the 7 remaining villages which were not included in the Rufford project we were able to educate over 1200 students aged 10-14 in 14 villages adjacent to Bamu National Park with effort of 86,400 student-hours teaching. Basic lessons on conservation of nature, Bamu National Park and Persian leopard as the flagship species of the region were among the most important portions of the studies. Indeed a Persian leopard educational booklet and a school bag with a conservation motto were given after the classes to the students. Also they participated in a leopard drawing and story-writing competition afterward and awards such as leopard posters were disseminated among them.
Basic leopard conservation education programmes for the game-wardens trust		✓		Basic conservation education for game-wardens focussed on means of ecotourism and also

and local volunteer's NGO.				implementation of modern research techniques in conservation of an umbrella species like Persian leopard. One game-warden of Bamu NP is now fully certified and completed all the courses and five more had participated in some of the courses. The problem is that Bamu NP has over 35 game-wardens distributed in a vast area and bringing them to a class can damage the conservation safety of the park. So in future we are trying to move the classes to each station and fully educate 5-7 wardens in each of them.
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2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

The first difficulty occurred after the approval of the project in March 2008 when it took 3 months for the team to receive the project fund because of political sanctions against Iran and after using a few different methods in money transfer, finally the fund reached Iran with more than usual payment for the transfer (because of using many third-party banks).

Other problem, which is almost usual in developing countries with conservation projects, is the corruption in governmental organizations. We tried to avoid any bribery but we had to give the national park manager a small gift for making stronger bounds with him for future development of project and his collaboration with the project.

The fuel crisis in Iran since June 2008 was another issue which had some effects on the project as we were unable to use the project field car extensively. This made the process of field work harder and more time-consuming.

The recession and world economic crisis caused unusual fluctuations in the exchange rate of GBP:IRR (local currency) that GBP reached its lowest price in the past 5 years during Summer 2008 and this faced the project with limitations. While the budget breakdown during the project proposal preparing was assumed with exchange rate of 1:1850, during the project it reached 1:1350, near 25% drop in price of GBP which was totally unforeseen.

One of the main unforeseen problems happened during the project was political instability in the Iran since June 2009 which caused serious problems in preparation of the final report due to lack of access to the internet, lack of motivation of project members in work because of lots of unexpected affairs in few weeks and everyday economical and emotional crisis.

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

1. Education of 1200 students aged 10-14 in all the villages around Bamu NP had a great impact on the whole society of indigenous people living adjacent to it and we are sure that the future generation of people there will be much less human-wildlife conflicts and people will respect Bamu NP and its biodiversity as their heritage.

2. The educational materials (poster, booklet, bag, etc.) has a more long-lasting influence on the local community and we believe by continuing such actions the level of poaching which is the main threat to leopards (directly and indirectly by lack of prey) will be minimized. Already in many villages in the region posters of leopard can be seen in shops and public places which is a mean of capacity building for the community.

3. Introducing ecotourism as a sustainable use of natural environment which has direct benefits to the protected areas and local communities was one of the most important outcomes of the project. By bringing the first tour of wildlife lovers to the park, game-wardens and local people practically involved in the first practical involvement of them and the general attitude toward it was really positive. The pilot tour at Bamu NP showed that there are massive potentials in both the park and the local community to implement detailed ecotourism capacity building and visitor management projects.

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

In all the process of project local communities were fully involved in the project. From managing the educational workshops for students, they were fully supportive and were hoping we can repeat the same classes for other ages too. Indeed we bestowed from the knowledge of locals in preparing the booklet and also the talks for classes so that children can feel that their culture is being respected and is a valuable heritage just like their surrounding environment. Education of game-wardens also had positive effects on the other game-wardens and even poachers of Bamu NP. Once they considered leopard as a pest species which even preys on other wildlife of the park and did no effort in conserving them and sometimes even they decided to cull them too! But now they are fully aware of the importance of this species in the world and also fines in case of poaching leopards.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

We are ambitious to continue the public-awareness and educational activities of Persian leopard conservation which have started during this project in future, educational workshops for younger (7-10 years) and older (14-19 years) students living in vicinity of the site, more specialized workshops for Bamu National Park game wardens in modern research and conservation methods of wildlife in the world, holding Persian leopard festivals in Shiraz city and other cities for all ages, etc. are major activities we are willing to perform to facilitate the conservation process of the Persian leopard in future.

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

We will publish our final report of the project in English and Farsi through our website (www.plan4land.org) in PDF format as we had regular news on our activities during the project year

on the same website. Indeed printed copies of the report and results in Farsi will be distributed in Department of Environment of Fars province, Bamu National Park visitor centre and central station and also all the schools we had our workshops in. Several copies of the report will be kept at our office in Tehran for public-awareness and students use.

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

The project fund was spent during the time period of June 2008-July2009.

The project actually started three months later than the date of its approval because of problems in money transfer.

The budget was spent on the scheduled time-table of the project but unforeseen bank commissions, higher price for fuel and political issues in Iran made some changes to finalizing the project in the most perfect way.

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
Workshops and festivals and disseminating published materials	£1800	£1500	-300	Less money was spent on the workshops in villages around Bamu NP because of in-kind cooperation of DoE of Fars province (free meeting rooms in Bamu NP offices for gatherings), so the money was spent on producing more educational material for children.
Ecotourism as a sustainable income	£1200	£1070	-130	Because of lack of funds available, we had to limit our expenditure on ecotourism development and further capacity-building projects on this issue are necessary in future.
Workshops in primary schools of 7 BNP surrounding villages	£800	£1100	+300	More money was spent on designing and producing educational materials for younger generation. Enough number of booklets, posters and bags were prepared with this money which was really useful and encouraging for the local communities.
Education programmes for the game-wardens trust and local volunteer's NGO	£1000	£750	-250	Like above.

TOTAL	£4800	£4420	£380	Because of unexpected several bank commission charges during the transfer
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9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

The Persian leopard project in Iran is an ongoing project performing by Plan for the Land Society and under the management of Arash Ghoddousi. This project focuses on research and conservation activities in various leopard habitats around the country. Among conservation activities we are looking to improve our educational courses for indigenous people in project sites.

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, we used the RSGF logo on materials produced during and from the budget of the project. School students less noticed the logo on their booklets and bags but older people asked about the identity and origin of the logo and they were so amused how a foundation in another country is helping the conservation of a species in the vicinity of their home town while they didn't pay attention to it before this project.

11. Any other comments?

Many thanks for supporting Persian leopard conservation in Iran, I believe the activities under this project had positive impacts on local communities of Bamu National Park with particular focus on younger generation who we hope will be the major conservation body of the magnificent nature of their region.