

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	Jaime Bolanos-Jiménez
Project title	Empowering local communities for responsible development of whalewatching in Venezuela
RSG reference	08 07 07
Reporting period	October 2007-March 2009
Amount of grant	£ 5,000
Your email address	megapterax@yahoo.com
Date of this report	07 April, 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
3 training seminars for educators			X	Three training seminars were presented to educators and their pupils in Ocumare de la Costa de Oro and Mariara, including educators participating in the Ibero-American encounter of Educators, organized by the regional office of the Ministry of Education in coordination with local educators in Ocumare de la Costa. Attendance included 85 educators. Additionally, advice was provided all along the year to Profs. Gerson Macía and Cristina Castillo, Coordinators of the Science Center for young Scientists of the César Zumeta High School, for awareness and sensitizing activities directed by them at a local level.
3 training seminars for local entrepreneurs and lectures			X	Four training seminars and lectures were presented in the cities/villages: Maracay, Cata Bay (State of Aragua), Mérida (State of Mérida) and Puerto Concha (State of Zulia). Attendance included 30 local leaders/ entrepreneurs, 21 journalists and 20 fishermen/skippers. Advice was provided during 2008-2009 to 30 members of the Social Network for Innovative Production on Ecotourism in Ocumare de la Costa de Oro for the design and presentation of a project proposal to be funded by the People's Ministry for Science and Technology (www.mct.gob.ve) and Fundacite Aragua (www.fundacite.arg.gob.ve).
3 training seminars for Biology and Tourism students.		X		Two training seminars were presented at the UPEL University, Maracay, State of Aragua and University of Oriente, Boca de Río, Margarita Island. Because of the great number of attendees, the seminar in Margarita Island was split into two sessions. Attendance included 123 students and professionals in Tourism and Biology. UNEFA University students Ms. Diana Arocha and Ms. Ladiana Contreras participated as interns in Sea Vida's

				<p>projects, field trips and training activities, in fulfilment of their subjects for getting the Degree of T.S.U. in Tourism. Also, logistic support, co-funding, training in research methods and tutorship is being provided to undergraduate students Ms. Graciela Castro and Mr. Leonardo Sifontes, for their undergraduate theses. These students are participating in field surveys and processing of photographs of the study described below.</p>
<p>7 Lectures and ecological games in local schools in Ocumare de la Costa de Oro</p>		X		<p>In coordination with local educators and Fundacite Aragua, at least 123 high school students from Ocumare de la Costa, Mariara and Santa Cruz, participated in lectures and field trips to learn about the importance of conservation of dolphin populations and local ecosystems, including cloud forests and mangroves in the Henri Pittier National Park. Emphasis was given to empower local educators and members of Science Center for young scientists of the "César Zumeta" High School' in Ocumare de la Costa for participation in sensitizing activities and Science Festivals. Pupils of this Science Center, with advice from Sea Vida, participated 20-22 June in the "Festival of Science and Technology for High School students of the State of Aragua" hosted by Fundacite Aragua. In the meeting, these students were awarded First Place and were called to participate in the corresponding National Festival representing the State of Aragua. Profs. Gerson Macía and Cristina Castillo directed sensitizing activities in local schools in Ocumare de la Costa.</p>
<p>Gathering of bio-ecological information on cetacean populations.</p>			X	<p>Between October 2007 and March 2009, 32 days were spent in the field, obtaining data on the population status of dolphin populations by using photo-identification (photo-ID) techniques aboard a small boat. This is the first time in Venezuela that such a study has been conducted. Currently, more than 6,000 ID photographs are being processed. As a result, at least 220 dolphins have been identified and incorporated into Sea</p>

			<p>Vida's photo-ID catalogue. A set of photographs of photo-identified bottlenose dolphins (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) was provided to Biol. Sergio Cobarrubia for use in his Master's thesis, as part of an agreement for information/data sharing.</p> <p>With the results of this project, manuscripts are being prepared for submission to scientific journals and presentations at the next Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) to be held in Madeira, Portugal during May-June 2009:</p> <p>a) Population status of the Atlantic spotted (<i>Stenella frontalis</i>) and bottlenose (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) dolphin in the State of Aragua, central coast of Venezuela, on the basis of photo-ID techniques.</p> <p>b) An overview of skin diseases and trauma to cetaceans off the State of Aragua, central Venezuela.</p> <p>c) Insights into the long-term residency pattern of the Atlantic spotted dolphin off the Aragua State, central Venezuela.</p>
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2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

The main difficulty was cancellation or delays of planned seminars because of unforeseen events at a local level. In Merida City, for example, many attendees could not participate in the seminar because of a riot in downtown. Nevertheless, participation of local educators Mrs. Cristina Castillo and Mr. Gerson Macía helped to increase/improve the coverage of the project. On the other side, it was detected that tour operators in other regions of Venezuela were really interested in participating in training and sensitizing activities for improving their abilities to interact with tourists. Thus, authorization was requested to the project oversight to expand the coverage of the project to include other regions of Venezuela and to extend the deadline for finishing the project.

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

- 30 community leaders in Ocumare de la Costa de Oro, with support and advice from Sea Vida's team, solved intern challenges and finished a proposal for the project "Social Network of Innovative Production for Ecotourism, Ocumare de la Costa de Oro". The proposal, previously agreed with the People's Ministry for Science and Technology (www.mct.gob.ve) and Fundacite Aragua (www.fundacite.arg.gob.ve), includes a grant of up to US\$ 90.000 for improving the Community capabilities for serving ecotourists. Sea Vida will provide in-kind support for this project, equivalent to approx. US\$ 110,000. This support will be in the form of supporting and conducting three research projects, four training seminars, and providing advice to members of the local network for responsible ecotourism and implementing an

advertising campaign. At the present moment, authorities of the MPPCT and Fundacite Aragua are reviewing the project proposal presented by the local community.

- Tour operators in the cities of Mérida, Ocumare de la Costa, Puerto la Cruz and Cumaná have agreed to start an alliance to design a special tour called the “Route of the Venezuelan dolphins” to be promoted at national and international level for attracting tourists to watch several species of dolphins in several regions in Venezuela.
- The scientific foundation for the programme has improved remarkably and the knowledge of dolphin populations in the State of Aragua has increased too, including such aspects as population status, residency pattern and skin diseases. Also, Sea Vida's team and young researchers have been granted access to up to date sampling protocols and methodologies for field research.

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

The local community in Ocumare de la Costa de Oro have participated actively in the design of a sustainable project for development of responsible ecotourism and will count on financial and technical support from the MPPCT, Fundacite Aragua and Sea Vida. In this process, they agreed a voluntary code of responsible conduct and presented a proposal for a regulatory instrument for ecotourism to be implemented at a municipal level and have agreed on guidelines for responsible dolphin watching. For the design and presentation of their project, they learned that working cooperatively increase their chances to achieve common goals. The alliance for accomplishing this task include the local Chamber of Commerce, a TV Channel, the Municipal Institute for Tourism, the MPPCT, Fundacite Aragua and Sea Vida.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. The project for the “Social Network for Innovative Production in Ecotourism” is designed to be accomplished during one calendar year and includes training and sensitizing seminars, scientific research, an advertising campaign and the acquiring of computers, digital cameras and other equipments for both serving tourists and conducting scientific research. Thus, both scientific research and awareness activities will be granted from now on.

It is also important to emphasize that, at this moment, Sea Vida and local tour operators and supporters in Mochima Town, State of Sucre and Ciudad Bolívar, State of Sucre, agreed to provide funding and logistic support to present two training seminar on responsible dolphin watching on May 2009. In Mochima town, 60 fishermen and skippers operate a cooperative to server tourists for visiting the beaches of the national park and to watch dolphins.

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

From a scientific view, the results of this project will be available to the international community as they will be presented at the 61th annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission and published in peer-review journals. From the sustainability view, the experience gained here will be used as the foundation for the design of future training seminars. Undergraduate students Ms. Graciela Castro and Mr. Leonardo Sifontes will have the opportunity to benefit of this experience to accomplish the objectives of their research project. Also, Sea Vida's board of Directors approved Jaime's proposal to design an implement an “internship program” to instruct biology students on research methods and field work for evaluating the status of cetacean populations on the basis of photo-ID techniques. Interns will invest one week participating in cetacean surveys, taking and

processing pictures, participating in lectures and group discussions and learning about the local culture and ecosystems.

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

The RSG was used between October 2007 and March 2009. The original proposal considered the release of the final report by late February 2009. We requested authorization for a delay of 4 months to help accomplish training and sensitizing activities in other regions of Venezuela where needed. During this period, we expanded the coverage of the project to other regions and also increased remarkably the value of the scientific project and output.

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. Includes only expenses covered with by the RSG Grant. Does note include expenses covered by Sea Vida.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Per diem and travel expenses (field trips to Ocumare de la Costa, Mariara, Maracay, Mérida, Puerto Concha, Mochima and Margarita Island).	715	715		
Per diem expenses, field trips to Ocumare de la Costa, research project	1,188	1,188		
A digital camera, Canon EOS Rebel Xti and accessories	260	830	+570	Camera and accessories well suited for better results in dolphin photo-ID studies
Binding Machine	50	40	-10	
Laser printer and toner	387	210	+177	Difference used for camera and accessories
Paper stacks and office articles	60	108	- 48	
Boat rental	2,340	2,340		
TOTAL	5,000	5,431	+431	Difference covered by Sea Vida's Board of Directors

(Exchanging rate = 3BsF per £ sterling)

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

At a local level, in the Municipality of Ocumare de la Costa de Oro, the approval of the proposal for the "Social Network for Innovative Production on Ecotourism" will provide a strong support for conservation and scientific activities in the region. According to authorities of Fundacite Aragua and MPPCT, the process of reviewing and approval of the proposal could last 8 weeks.

At this moment, we feel that research efforts and training activities should start in such places as the Mochima and Ciénaga de Juan Manuel National Parks for helping local fishermen and skippers to

improve their capabilities to operate sustainably. These are protected areas that hold populations of dolphins considered vulnerable to extinction (Guiana dolphin, *Sotalia guianensis*) or are endemic to a region (long snouted common dolphin, *Delphinus capensis*)

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, RSGF logo was used in our calls for seminars, Power Point presentations and RSGF support was acknowledged publicly during our activities. It will also be properly acknowledged in the Acknowledgements section of all of the scientific papers we will publish in peer-review journals and during discussions at the Small Cetaceans and Whale Watching subcommittees of the International Whaling Commission in Madeira, Portugal, next June 2009 (Invitation letter attached). A poster related to the process of empowering local communities, including the logo and the reference to RSG support was displayed during our participation at scientific meetings as the II and III Science and Technology Congress of the State of Aragua, sponsored by Fundacite Aragua and the II and III National Meeting for Popularization of Science, sponsored by the MPPCT. The poster also was displayed at the classroom during our seminars and lectures.

11. Any other comments?

- We would like to thank so much the authorization to expand coverage of the project and to extend the deadline for release of the final report.
- An agreement was made to contribute data to the Ocean Biogeographic Information System Spatial Ecological Analysis of Megavertebate Populations (OBIS-SEAMAP), a project led by Drs. Andrew Read and Patrick Halpin of Duke University, North Carolina, USA. OBIS-SEAMAP is aimed at augmenting our understanding of the distribution and the ecology of marine mammals, birds and turtles at a global level (<http://seamap.env.duke.edu/about>). The results of the surveys accomplished by Sea Vida's team between January-February 2009 are available online at <http://seamap.env.duke.edu/datasets/detail/499>.
- On 2008, Jaime was awarded the distinction "Rostros de la Ciencia del Estado Aragua" an award granted by Fundacite Aragua to scientists and inventors who have remarkably contributed to the development of science and technology in the State of Aragua (see http://rostrosdelaciencia.fundacite.arg.gov.ve/Bio_Jaime_Bolanos.html).
- Also, we will send attachments including files with a more detailed report, photographic annexes and press articles.



Left: Educators of the Misión Sucre, Ocumare de la Costa de Oro, State of Aragua. Right: Training seminar to journalist and media experts.



Left: Informal lecture to fishermen, skippers and tour operators, Mochima Town, State of Sucre. Right: A training seminar in Puerto Concha, State of Zulia.



Left: Participants in a training seminar learn about the importance of local ecosystem, Henri Pittier National Park, State of Aragua. Right: Sensitizing lecture, Anzoátegui Highschool, Mariara, State of Carabobo.



Left: Interns Ms. Ladiana Contreras and Diana Arocha, of the UNEFA University, were provided advise for fulfilment of their Degree. Right: Training seminar for Tourism and Biology students, Universidad de Oriente, Boca de Río, Margarita Island.



Ms. Graciela Castro recording data as part of her training for her undergraduate thesis.



Profs. Gerson Macía and Cristina Castillo, of the César Zumeta Highschool, were provided advise for their Masters Theses. At their high school, they directed awareness and sensitizing activities for teachers and pupils.



In plenary sessions, the members of the Social Network for Innovative Production on Ecotourism, with support from Sea Vida researchers and in the presence of Fundacite Aragua representatives decide the future of their network and common goals.



Young scientists of the César Zumeta High School were granted First Place in a regional Science Festival, and were granted the right to represent the State of Aragua in the Corresponding National Festival.



Prof. Raiza Gárate and pupils of the Anzoátegui High School, Mariara, State of Carabobo, organizing and directing sensitizing activities for conservation of marine species and habitats.



Vice-minister for Development of Science and Technology, Mrs. Gladis Maggi-Villaruel and authorities of Fundacite Aragua, Dr. Clemente Herrera and Ing. Luis Varela, interchange views on the Network Project and Sea Vida's activities during the II Regional Congress of Science and Technology



Interest of the media help increase awareness for conservation of marine habitats and local ecosystems.



