

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	Tarsh Thekaekara
Project title	Adapting to Invasives – a community based approach to research and extraction of <i>Lantana camara</i>
RSG reference	11218-1
Reporting period	March 2012 to July 2013
Amount of grant	£5920
Your email address	tarsh@thesholatrust.org

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
Facilitate the creation of two village-based lantana furniture manufacturing units			X	Working through the village based 'eco development committees' and with financial support from the forest department these set up and supported for a year.
Create a rough map of the spread of lantana through the reserve based on field staff knowledge.			X	Rough map was made and has grown into a much larger project on developing a methodology that will allow field staff to monitor the spread of Lantana.

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

1. There was a long delay in obtaining permission from the forest department which delayed the project by 3 months.
2. The indigenous communities did not take the lantana manufacturing as their sole livelihood and engage with it in addition to many other forms of employment.

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

1. The communities' response to the new livelihood option (in terms of not completely shifting to it) threw up some interesting questions about indigenous world views. It triggered a full-fledged research project into better understanding the process of livelihood choices/decision making among indigenous communities. This resulted in a publication of a book chapter listed below. Results of this have been communicated to the forest department and are likely to have some impact on the future planning of conservation and development initiatives with indigenous communities.

Thekaekara, Tarsh, Nishita Vasanth and Thomas F. Thornton. (In press). Diversity in sustenance mechanisms of a fringe community - an inquiry near Mudumalai, Tamil Nadu. In *Livelihood Strategies in Southern India: Conservation and Poverty Reduction in Forest Fringes*, Seema Purushothaman and Rosa Abraham, editors. Springer

The findings of this study were also presented at the Student Conference on Conservation Science, Bangalore, 2013, with a summary below:

Aim: *To closely examine a Lantana manufacturing unit in the Chembakolly village, trying to understand the livelihood activities and choices of the Kattunayakan community, and the implications of this for such 'conservation and development' initiatives.*

Results: *(1) Diverse portfolio of livelihood options, driven by an alternative "hunter-gatherer world view". A single family engaged in up to 10 different activities in a year, without a strong allegiance to any one defining 'livelihood'.(2) Overall negative correlation between time spent and income earned from different livelihood activities, implying that they actually chose to spend less of their time on activities that earned higher incomes.(3) Lantana manufacture adds resilience the community's capacity to cope with changes, but was just one activity within a dynamic "livelisystem" of activities and relations, and can never be an "alternate livelihood".*

Discussion & Conclusion: *The default basis of conservation and livelihood programmes – if people are given the option of making more money, they will take it – is perhaps not accurate. The very idea of one 'livelihood' for hunter gatherer or forest-based communities is questionable, and the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living". Their choices are not based merely on financial constraints but also on cultural appetites for certain activities and practices, and ideas of animism and 'other-than-human personhood'. Considerable research needs to go into understanding forest communities before such programmes are implemented with them.*

As a result of our findings, we have decided not to continue with anymore 'lantana furniture units', but we hope to continue with experiments on getting local people to 'use' the invasive species as a management strategy.

2. The research component of the project was very well received by the forest department despite bureaucratic delays from the state capital. Research permits have been extended for another year to undertake a more thorough assessment of the spread of lantana and to develop a methodology to do this, so that it can be monitored year after year without external support. During the research, there were significant 'in kind' contributions from the forest department, particularly in providing vehicles for transport and also in terms of the time dedicated to this by the forest department staff (around 120 man days).
3. Though working with the forest department in India is a significant challenge, it has been quite rewarding. Across the ranks, from temporary anti-poaching watchers, to forest guards to Range Officers, there is a keen interest in better understanding the spread of lantana and planning more long-term interventions. Rather than trying to lobby with the forest department to use the results of the research in their management, they now see this as their own research, and will use the results irrespective of the institutional framework around it.

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

Local communities were involved at two levels:

1. In the lantana furniture units. As described above, the manufacture of lantana furniture has added to the indigenous communities' skillset and increased the diversity in their livelihood options. Though they have not adapted to this as their single livelihood it has made them less dependent on the more powerful local estate/landowners for employment.
A good indicator of the benefits is that two other villages are also very keen on starting lantana furniture units. We will support these programmes from the outside but will not be fully engaging with it.
2. Working with tribal field staff and using their knowledge to map lantana. There was considerable enthusiasm on the part of the local field staff in terms of 'empowerment' when they realised their knowledge of lantana was useful and the process of converting it into maps was 'research'.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, the work will continue in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, more by the forest department staff themselves with our role being more to provide support. It is also going to be expanded to the neighbouring reserves – the Bandipura Tiger Reserve and Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary. Research permits for Bandipura have already been obtained.

This work may also fit into a larger project aimed at looking at 'Human adaptation to biodiversity change', a framework grant funded by ESPA (<http://www.espa.ac.uk/funding/fellowships/ne-i004149-1>). This is subject to successful follow up funding.

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

The map generated as a part of the project has already been distributed widely at the local level (stuck on Range Office walls). The map will also be released under a creative commons licence, particularly on platforms like the www.indiabiiversityportal.org. The overall results of this work will also eventually be published as scientific manuscripts in peer reviewed journals.

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

The research phase of the project will continue for another three or so, with the first one year being funded by the RSG. That is, the total length of the project is from March 2012 till about April 2016, with the RSG funding being used from March 2012 to July 2013.

The furniture intervention started 3 years ago, with the RSG supporting the creation of the last two furniture units over the last year. This intervention will not be continued or scaled up, but other opportunities of using the invasive plant (like the manufacture of briquettes to be used as a fuel source etc.) will be explored.

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. Local exchange rate at the start of project was INR75/1GBP.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Salaries	3340	4342	-1002	Since the project duration was extended by 3 months the expenses overshoot the budget, but additional funds from The Shola Trust were used to cover the difference.
Vehicle hire/transport	1440	1413	27	
Furniture making: Tools, miscellaneous and working costs	1140	1667	-527	Shortfall covered by The Shola Trust. Overall, the project had additional funding in addition to the RSG, so some discrepancies were expected.
Total	5920	7422	-1502	

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

We still have to secure research permits to expand this work into the neighbouring state of Kerala (Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary).

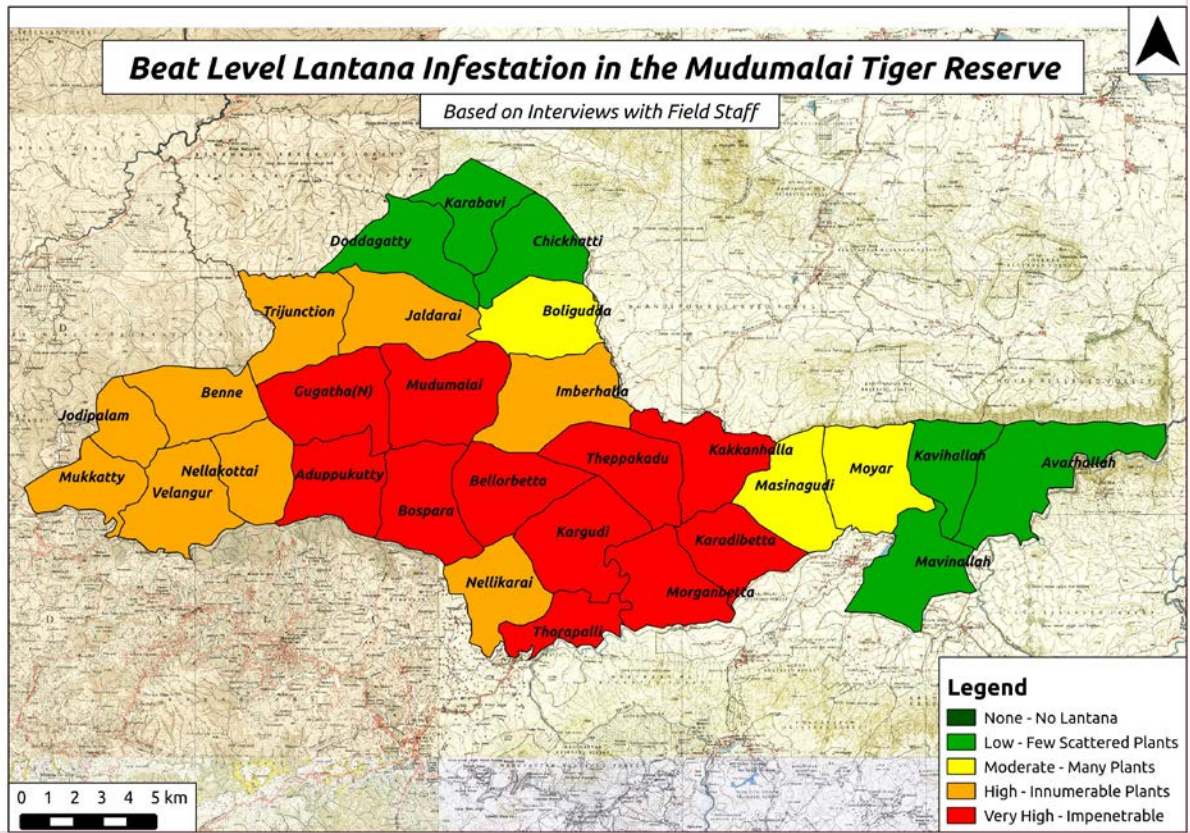
We also need to secure funding to continue with the work.

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?

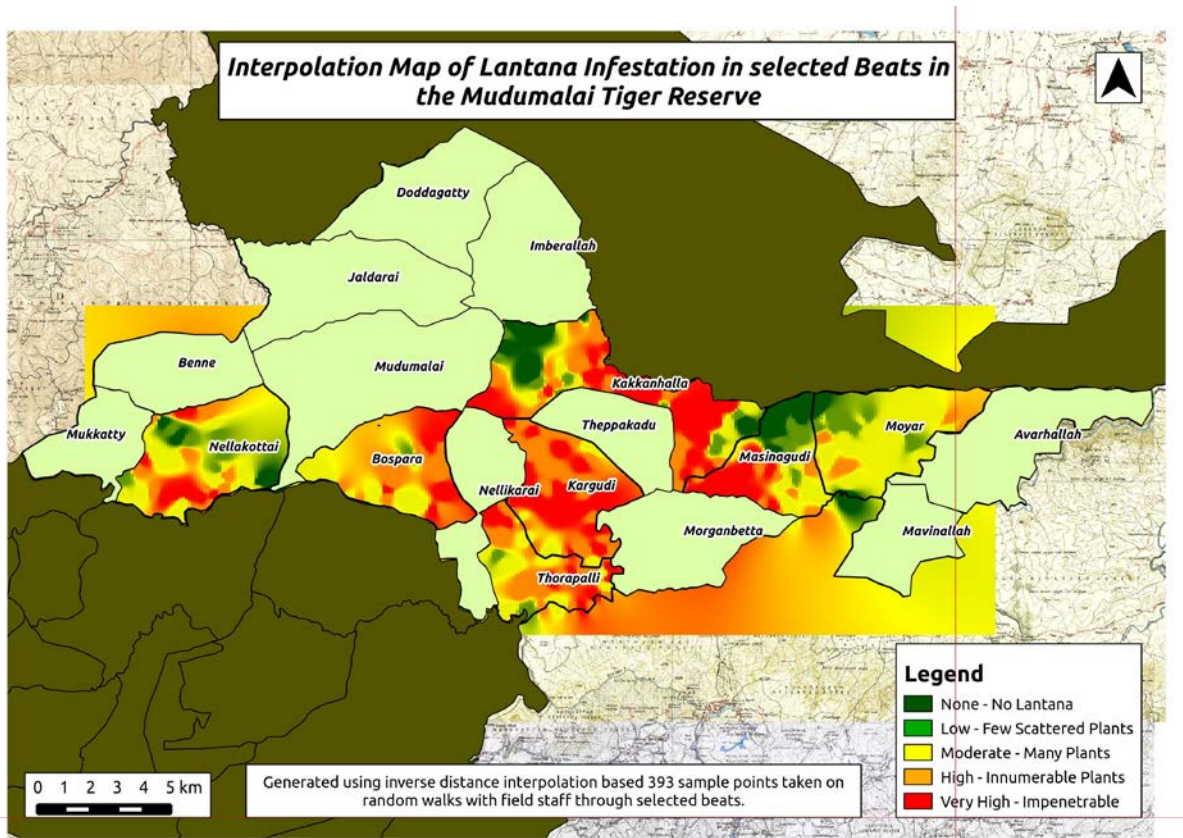
The RSG logo was not used. Credit was given to the RSG on the poster presented at the SCCS in Bangalore, and due credit will be given in the upcoming book chapter to be published by Springer.

11. Any other comments?

The RSG has been one of the most hassle-free funders we have worked with – thank you for that! The reporting format is very simple, but also allowing us to reflect on the success and failures of let us learn from them.



MTR Beats Lantana



MTR Lantana IDWInt Aug2013