



## The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

### Final Report

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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](mailto:jane@rufford.org).

Thank you for your help.

**Josh Cole, Grants Director**

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Grant Recipient Details	
<b>Your name</b>	Anne Toomey (PI and team leader), María Copa and Igor Patzi (co-PIs)
<b>Project title</b>	Closing the gap between conservation research and practice in Madidi National Park, Bolivia
<b>RSG reference</b>	13678-1
<b>Reporting period</b>	August 2013-September 2014
<b>Amount of grant</b>	£6000
<b>Your email address</b>	a.toomey@lancaster.ac.uk (principal contact) mecopa@hotmail.com (Maria Copa) ips1a@yahoo.com (Igor Patzi)
<b>Date of this report</b>	September 30, 2014

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
Improved communication between stakeholders		x		<p>Part of our work involved bringing together different types of stakeholders through workshops, in which scientists were asked to present the results of long-term research projects to community leaders and park guards.</p> <p>The workshops allowed researchers to identify shortcomings such as the use of technical language, the privileging of 'pure science' over applied research, and delays in 'giving back' of research results (over 5 years), among others.</p> <p>Among local actors, there was increasing awareness that the benefits of research occur at different levels (community, park, national, international) and through being informed as to the results of research, they themselves can often find ways to make use of new knowledge.</p>
Identification of the kind of information needed by local stakeholders to make informed decisions about land use and natural resources management.		x		<p>Many of our workshops incorporated discussions about what kinds of research or technical information is useful to local stakeholders - both with regards to the territorial management of indigenous lands, as well as the management of protected areas (and of areas of overlap between the two).</p> <p>We have qualitative data that reflects what kind of research has been useful in the past, as well as lists of priority research needs for the future (according to local actors). We will be preparing a guide for dissemination next year that incorporates this information for future researchers, as well as a list of guidelines for working in an ethically responsible manner with local people.</p>
Participatory methodologies and dissemination strategies.		x		<p>As part of our research we learned of the extent to which written information (especially in the form of academic articles and technical reports) is not used in decision-making in the region.</p>

			<p>We found piles of dusty documents in many offices, some with (what would be) very relevant information for natural resources management. Knowledge exchange among indigenous communities in Bolivia is primarily communicated orally, as opposed to through written information, and local actors provided many suggestions of alternative ways that research can and should be shared more widely. As a result of these conversations we are making a short documentary to present these local perspectives to a wider scientific audience.</p>
Improved knowledge of how to make community-based conservation work.		x	<p>Many conversations with park guards, scientists and community leaders revealed the great potential of scientific research (and the role of researchers themselves) to help protect and manage territories in the region.</p> <p>However, it was clear from our work that there is a great deal of misunderstanding about what scientific research is and who it is for. We hope that our printed guide and documentary will serve to clear up some of the confusion over this, and we are in the process of writing academic articles to be published in conservation science journals about these issues.</p>
Taking a first step towards inserting research into co-management strategies in Madidi		x	<p>In 2013 we held workshops with Madidi park guards, who were very interested in developing regulations for research in the protected area. However, during follow-up workshops in 2014 they expressed that the current political climate was such that it would be of no use to send their suggestions to their regulating institution (the National Service of Protected Areas - SERNAP). However, we have shared the results of our work with those in charge at both SERNAP as well as the Vice-Ministry of the Environment, who are in the process of developing a regulation for research for all of the protected areas in the country, and we will continue these discussions after the new presidential administration is elected (at the end of this year). In addition, we helped two indigenous</p>

				communities whose lands that overlap Madidi (San Miguel and San Jose de Uchupiamonas) to create community norms to regulate research in their territories, and at some of these workshops park staff were also present.
Building alliances between scientific institutions and communities for mutually-beneficial research.		x		This is very much a long-term goal, dependent on the individual institutions and communities. However, our workshops in which scientists presented to communities led to requests from all parties to continue this work, with the aim of developing mutually-beneficial research agreements for the future.

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

Floods in the Amazon region and study area between February and March this year (2014) were the worst in more than a decade. The effect of this unexpected natural disaster was the changing of the interests and priorities of the people in the communities, concerned about the loss of their resources, housing, crops and diseases. The difficulty was met by maintaining contact with indigenous leaders to express solidarity, albeit from a distance, and as a result good relationships were maintained, which favoured the work that continued later in the year. In addition, upcoming presidential elections in 2014 made it difficult to bring certain types of actors together, as the current political climate makes any kind of proposals for improvements or change a sensitive issue. Aside from these more external complications, a more general challenge was due to the fact that indigenous communities in the Madidi region are overloaded with workshops of all types. It was necessary to approach communities by first having frank discussions of how our work could be of direct benefit to them, which required some rethinking within the project about these issues. Also, organising workshops in Bolivia requires a great deal of time, as times and dates are not set in stone but require a great deal of flexibility and willingness to reschedule. On every occasion it was necessary to adjust our timeframes to those of the communities and park guards.

We had also hoped to involve social researchers in the workshops, but encountered little interest and a great deal of resistance (especially among Bolivian anthropologists) to the project goals. The reasons expressed by some were that the aims of the project seemed irrelevant to their work. As a short-term response to a rather complex situation, we focussed our work on researchers from the natural sciences. On the long-term (in 2015), we hope to inspire interest among social researchers by setting up meetings with professional sociologists, anthropologists and archaeologists, including senior academics as well as undergraduate and graduate students.

Finally, our own interdisciplinary research team underwent an intense process of learning to work together, aiming to support individual interests and strengths, while at the same time adapting to additional professional and personal commitments of each team member. We learned a great deal about how to communicate better this year, and now three of us (Maria, Igor and Anne - Armando was involved in the project until leaving Bolivia in late 2013) are still very committed to continuing this work in the Madidi region and perhaps beyond. Evidence of this shared commitment is the fact that this report was written as a collaborative effort by all three of us whilst based in different

countries and in Spanish, and was then translated into English by Anne.

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

- 1) The coming together of local actors and researchers in workshops. Through the process of disseminating research results, many challenges emerged for the participating researchers, and it became clear to all those involved of the importance of developing dissemination strategies that take into account local realities. Although our workshops were limited in the number of researchers and communities involved, they provided a window into the potential to be generated from scientific research in general, and both community members and park guards elaborated on the practical uses of certain kinds of information, once it was shared with them.
- 2) This project has planted many seeds of interest in the minds of Bolivian researchers in the natural sciences, as well as some protected areas staff, with regards to the importance of improving interactions and relations between researchers and local residents. Although in many cases researchers and park staff have applied ethical principles in their dealings with the inhabitants of indigenous communities, we also came across situations where research practices were unbalanced and/or unjust. At national and international levels, many regulations and protocols exist with regards to how to do scientific research on indigenous lands in an ethical and appropriate manner, however, these regulations are not often abided, in part because the indigenous peoples themselves do not always understand their scope and importance. Similarly, when scientists and researchers visit communities, people and their organisations are seldom sufficiently empowered to seek proper explanation and compensation for the presence of outsiders, especially researchers. Due to this situation, we helped two indigenous communities with lands that overlap Madidi (San Miguel and San Jose de Uchupiamonas) to create community norms to regulate research in their territories, and at some of these workshops park staff were also present.
- 3) This was a multidisciplinary, multi-stakeholder project with potentially vast implications for how research will be managed in the future, not just in the Madidi region, but in other parts of Bolivia as well. Through our work (formal and informal conversations, workshops, written information), we are promoting changes in the way scientific research is done in Bolivia over the long-term. For example, SERNAP – the National Service of Protected Areas in Bolivia – has incorporated our database of past research in Madidi into their management plan, and have suggested that they might duplicate our methodology for the rest of the protected area system in Bolivia (made up of 22 areas). We are also writing a letter to be published in a Bolivian academic journal (likely *Ecologia en Bolivia*), which will detail best practices for research.

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

Local communities participated in meetings and workshops, as noted above. This project gathered valuable perspectives on how research is seen by local people. Research regulations (protocols) were developed in two indigenous communities, whose leaders are now using it as a reference for their interactions with those who come to do research. The regulations were also presented and discussed in a subsequent workshops and assembly meetings in their communities, which opened up spaces for discussion and analysis on what research is and how it can be of more local relevance to communities. Thus, the initial stage of this project provided room for exchange and rapprochement between the scientific sector and the local population of Madidi.

Local participation has been variable to a large degree on where we worked. However, in all workshops people of different ages, primarily men, but also some women, raised interesting questions and reflections. The quality of participation has been proportional not only to the degree of trust that has been built between our own team and community authorities and rangers, but also with the previous experiences that the communities have had with researchers in the past.

#### **5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Yes. Park rangers, community members, and researchers who participated in various aspects of this work found the project to provide a chance to share and learn about the perspectives of other groups. Thus, we plan to continue this work into 2015 and 2016, while at the same time modifying some of the targets that may have been ambitious initially. We believe that this project could make a significant difference in supporting conservation projects that have a research component, essentially working to close the 'research---implementation gap' as described in our initial proposal.

More specifically, we are in the process of developing a guide for researchers that will be disseminated next year, in which we will include information about priority research topics for local stakeholders, ethical protocols, as well as other important local perspectives on research practices. Next year we would also like to include more people in our workshops, in particular social scientists, as the practice of social science (as carried out by sociologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, geographers and political scientists, among others), is not well understood by local communities.

This year we have stockpiled a lot of experience working in the field of research, in different social contexts and heterogeneous situations. Through these experiences, we have developed a much keener sense of what works and in which areas we need to develop new methodological tools for the future.

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

Depending on which audience we aim to address, different types of materials will be developed. As discussed above, we will prepare a guide a guide next year, in which we will incorporate the results of our project information for future researchers. Audio-visual testimonies and photographs of the process undertaken to date will also be presented. We will return to the communities where we carried out our activities in 2015 with the aim of disseminating further results of this work (in particular, the final PhD thesis of Anne Toomey, which will be translated into Spanish with copies made for each participating community/group).

For the scientific community, we will share the results of this work through scientific articles, writings for popular scientific websites and magazines (i.e. blogs – see below), participation in conferences and screenings of mini-documentaries. We have already begun this process with some conference presentations and documentary showings in 2013 and 2014 at Lancaster University, the Royal Geographical Society annual conference in London, and the Student Conservation Science conference at the University of Cambridge, at which the presentation given was commended as a runner-up for best talk.

Presentations were given on this work in Bolivia at the Department of Biodiversity in the Vice-

Ministry of Environment and also as part of a workshop organized by SERNAP in 2013.

In addition, the team leader also keeps a fieldwork blog, which can be accessed at <http://communitysciencebolivia.blogspot.co.uk/>

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

We spent about half of the funds allocated between August and December 2013, and the other half between June and September 2014. This balance reflects the months that the team leader was in the country as well as the additional responsibilities of team members regarding jobs and families. We still have a small amount of funds remaining (approximately £500), that will be spent over the next six weeks in two follow-up workshops - one with rangers in Apolo (Madidi is divided into two regions - Apolo and San Buenaventura - and to date we have worked primarily in San Buena) and the other with scientists in La Paz. The budget below reflects expenses including workshops to be held in October and November.

**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
Flights within Bolivia	700	881.71	181.71	
Other transport within Bolivia	850	650.76	-199.24	
Support for Bolivian team members	3100	2925.62	-174.39	
Cost of workshops and printed materials	1150	1308.29	158.29	
Communications	200	233.75	33.75	
Total	6000	6000		

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

The first step, and the most important, is to take stock of what we have managed to achieve thus far as compared to the goals we set for ourselves in 2013, such as the development of a guide for researchers and other materials. Looking towards 2015-2016, we aim to first address any gaps identified between what we originally set out to do versus what we were able to achieve thus far.

There exists much potential to take this project further – both in scope and scale, but first we would like to focus on three areas that we have identified as key. The first is with regards to social science research and involving both social scientists and communities that have hosted social scientists in discussions about their experiences with this research. There is some evidence from our work that some types of social research, such as ethnography, as seen by local people to be very intrusive and unethical in how they are carried out in practice, and there is a great lack of understanding about what this kind of research is for.

Secondly, as mentioned above, Madidi National Park covers a very large area and now that we

have carried out various activities in the lowlands is now important to replicate the same process in the upland regions of the park, where much ornithological and botanical research has been carried out (Apolo and Pelechuco, among others).

Finally, we are very interested in experimenting with different ‘participatory science’ methodologies in the communities where we have already worked. For example, to run basic courses on ‘schoolyard ecology’, through which common research procedures (both social science and natural science) can be better understood through hands-on practice, enabling wider comprehension on what research is and why it is done.

**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, the logo was placed on materials generated for workshops as well as on PowerPoint presentations (attached photos).

**11. Any other comments?**

On behalf of all of us, we are very grateful to Rufford for enabling us to do this work – thus far it has been an amazing experience that we hope to continue in the future.