

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	Khaled Sawalha
Project title	Ecotourism and Conservation of biodiversity in Bani Naim – Palestine
RSG reference	29.08.08
Reporting period	February 2009 – March 2010
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	kssawalha@science.alquds.edu
Date of this report	15 th March 2010

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
Conserve nature		X		People become aware of nature and its importance.
Conserve biodiversity		X		Efforts were made to save few endangered plants.
Increase environmental awareness		X		Specific targeted groups like students acquire skills respecting nature and its elements like plants.
Introducing ecotourism		X		Different groups (local, national, international visitors) visited the site.
Establishing biodiversity garden		X		The garden was established for the first time in the district and attracts attention. Needs more works to be ideal.
Establishing natural museum		X		The museum was established and needs more effort. The garden and the museum were adopted by local institutions in the strategic plan for development.
Training educators		X		Teachers were invited to participate in the project environmental educational activities.
Collection of plant materials (i.e. seeds)		X		Different plant specimens: herbarium, leaves, flowers, branches or seeds were collected to represent local Palestinian flora.
Live plant collection		X		Plants were transferred from the wild of Bani Naim into the biodiversity garden.
Field trips and skilled educational classes performed		X		These activities were organised for different groups: school students, public, university students and institutional staff.

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

Unexpected difficulties included: 1) lack of trained and skilled nature activists to share with project leader and to assist in the activities of the project. This difficulty was overcome by small group discussions prior to each activity. 2) The local institutions are not aware enough of importance of biodiversity and to be engaged in environmental activities. This was overcome by deep discussions with effective staff to support the project.

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

The three most important outcomes of this project are: 1) the establishment of biodiversity garden and natural museum in Bani Naim are landmarks for conservation of nature, where local organizations and community become deeply involved in development of such facilities. The future vision is to use them effectively in sustainable development of natural resources. 2) The environmental educational activities were performed effectively to increase environmental awareness targeting different groups with suitable approaches. Many visitors/ students paid attributes and gratitude's to type of activities of the project. 3) Introducing ecotourism in such a way to respect and enjoy nature. During the field trips and tours of the project site or in open nature; many visitors admire the type of information and knowledge delivered by trained nature guides or teachers. It come to realize the treasure of nature.

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

The local communities participated actively in many activities of the project: live plant collection (I could say proudly that many local farmers usually offer what they collect from nature including plants and stones and others invite me to observe natural site for documentation. It is not a joke that many friends and local residents called me a biodiversity man due to the activities in nature including this project), field trips, local ecotourism by visiting the garden and the museum. Family, school and teacher's visits were common to the garden and museum. Voluntary works were also performed especially participation of organised field and garden tours.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. Although the hosting local Bani Naim Society is doing and offering its effective support, but the society could not cover expenses without projects and due to lack of finance. Therefore, it is planned to apply for continuation grant of Rufford Foundation. In addition, other grant applications were made to different donors.

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

I am ready to share the results and outcomes of this project in many different approaches: at national level, the site of the project becomes unique place in the area to observe and to follow the example of using the national flora in gardens. Many environmental activists contacted me and exchange ideas related to the project. One idea came recently to adopt the formation of eco town's series in Palestine. Also, I am now writing a presentation on Eco University for a conference at Al-Quds University this year. At Al-Quds University, I was an internal examiner of MSc thesis titled: Activation of Ecotourism in Dead Sea area of Palestine. At international level, I welcome cooperation and sharing results with others to exchange ideas for sustainable development and conservation of nature. I will be happy to receive comments and suggestions. I will be ready to present the outcomes and analysis in international seminars, workshops or conferences. More likely if support is available; I could write and publish a detailed report or book on the activities of the project with strategic initiative to promote investment in nature with respect to earth.

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

The RSG funded project was planned for a whole year to fulfil the logical frame work and action plan. This can be justified as follows: the project started ideally in winter time of February 2009. It is perfectly planned to follow the natural cycle in terms of rainfall, temperature variation and seasonal changes though out the year to perform the project activities: landscaping, soil transfer, plant transfer and collection and to follow the harmony of plants with nature, like flowering time.

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
1. Construction works	500	505	- 5	Small difference, important
2. Consultation-supervision	400	434	-34	Supervision is essential
3. Labour	1100	974	+126	Cheap and voluntary
4. Exhibition hall	1500	1353	+147	Building was ready
5. Agro tools	500	636	-136	Most needed
6. Plant collection	700	810	-110	Many and diverse specimens
7. Irrigation	300	276	+ 24	Hand pipe irrigation used
8. Documentation	250	259	-9	A lot of work, voluntary used
9. Publications	250	250	0	Minimum cost of printing
10. Part time hiring	250	276	-26	People like to work in nature
11. Workshops - refreshment	250	326	-76	Lecturing and refreshments were offered during field works
Total	6000	6099	-99	Deficit was secured through fund raising and donations

Note: Rate of currency, 1 British £ sterling = 5.8 New Israeli Shekel (NIS)

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

The following steps should be taken for keeping the outcomes of the project:

- 1) Securing running cost of the biodiversity garden and the natural museum mainly maintenance activities. Bani Naim society could provide only minimum contribution.
- 2) Completion of scientific documentation of herbarium, seed and museum collections.
- 3) Expansion of biodiversity conservation activities to include more plants and even local animal diversity.
- 4) Promotion of ecotourism at regional and international level to visit the site and enjoy natural life. Especially attract tourists to enjoy the herbal life of medicinal plants of eastern slopes of Palestine (focus on Bani Naim wild life). For example, enjoy aromatics of herbal teas of medicinal plants, wild harvest of flowers, leaves, or seeds.

- 5) Expansion of present propagation nursery (Belongs to Bani Naim Society) of wild Palestinian flora to produce plants for gardens. It is worthy saying that there is extreme shortage of such native plants including (trees, shrubs, aromatics, bulbs).
- 6) A possible commercial investment proposal in nature is: extraction of essential oils of wild herbs of Bani Naim. The preliminary data showed strong high value products as medicines, perfumes, or food additives. I did my PhD in London on essential oils of two medicinal plants of Palestinian flora.

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. I usually mention the story of the project and funding agency namely Rufford, during my introduction in every talk, presentation and discussion with visiting groups and field trips. I refer proudly to say that my project is the first in Palestine and come as 1000th project of Rufford funded projects through out the world. I contacted BGCI staff for consultation on activities of the project. I presented some achievements in many talks in Palestine and abroad like the seminar held in Granada – Spain on Andalusia Botanic Gardens.

11. Any other comments?

I should thank Rufford Foundation to support my work in conservation of nature in my homeland of Palestine as a holy part of this world; Palestine land is described as land of milk and honey due to richness of biodiversity. It comes that plants should be saved at time of unrest like the case of Palestine. I feel to have more spiritual strength through this project to face the challenges at national and international levels; i.e. the impact of climate change. The project was remarkable to gain more experience and to educate local community for better understanding of nature and to keep natural balance.