

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	Heather Arrowood
Project title	Lake Oguemoué Ecotourism Pilot Project
RSG reference	8258-1
Reporting period	8/10-6/11
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	harrowood@gmail.com
Date of this report	8 July 2011

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
1) Identify the needs/wants of the local communities and community-proposed solutions			X	An NGO representing local participants was formed, Organisation Ecotouristique du Lac Oguemoué (OELO). OELO will own and operate the ecotourism site at Tsam Tsam village. The local community will continue to be involved in all future phases of the project. Profits from the site will fund environmental education efforts and community projects to be voted on annually by members of OELO.
2) Define target market and appropriate scale of operations			X	A market analysis was conducted in Libreville. The appropriate scale of the project and the product to be offered was determined from the market research and decided on in collaboration with OELO.
3) Identify and develop potential collaborations		X		This will be an ongoing process. The team contacted local hotels and operators to develop potential collaborations. A partnership with a local association of boat tour guides was established to offer lake tours in conjunction with a site visit to Tsam Tsam. Also, OELO is receiving support from the national government to promote tourism in the region.
4) Collect interpretive materials		X		Again, this is an ongoing process. We have been collecting documents, recording stories, and compiling species lists. Because the site is a proposed protected area, surveys are underway by conservation NGOs and this data will be compiled when available.
5) Train local guides and counterparts on ecotourism and hospitality		X		We have conducted three informal trainings, including a "test" visit to give local participants a better idea of hosting tourists. Future training will be designed in collaboration with other more experienced NGOs and guides in the region.
6) Write a basic Business Plan			X	An initial business plan is complete and is being pitched to potential collaborators.

7) Develop Action Plan for moving forward			X	An Action Plan has been written to move the project from a pilot phase to a full project phase. This action plan and the business plan have been used to approach potential collaborators.
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2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

Unfortunately, the boat that we had arranged to use broke down shortly into the project. This required that we rent boats for subsequent trips and shortened the trip lengths. We were unable to spend as many days as we would have liked at Tsam Tsam and therefore not as much time was spent training local guides and collecting interpretive materials as had been originally anticipated. Instead more time was spent in the capital completing a market analysis, working with the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Tourism to establish legal status, and developing partnerships with existing operators and hotels.

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

- The NGO, Organization Ecotouristique du Lac Oguemoue (OELO), was formed and has been legalized by the national government. The founding members have agreed on the mission, the basic structure of the organization, and internal regulations. The NGO is in the process of earning a tourism licence.
- A business plan has been created to establish a model ecotourism site and bushmeat education outreach centre called Tsam Tsam Isle. Profits from the semi-permanent tented site will fund hunter education and bushmeat outreach to local school children. A portion of profits will also fund community initiatives to be decided by OELO members.
- Tsam Tsam hosted its first group of self-catering tourists with great success. Feedback from participants has helped to better define Tsam Tsam’s ecotourism product and to give Tsam Tsam guides much needed experience.
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4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

Local communities have been involved from the initial stages when they contacted the ecotourism consultant to help them develop an ecotourism product. The local community, via OELO, is the owner and operator of the ecotourism site. The operations will be staffed by local people and the site will support other side businesses, such as mask making, cooking cooperatives, a dance troop and other local initiatives. In addition to funding environmental education and bushmeat outreach, profits from the site will support community initiatives (such as scholarships or clean water projects). The projects to be funded will be voted on annually by OELO members.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

We are using the Business Plan to raise funds for a full-project phase. Our hopes are to launch a semi-permanent tented site within the following year. In the immediate term we will continue to host small groups for camping excursions in partnership with the local boat tour guide association.

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

We invite opportunities to share our project at conferences and trade fairs in the future, so that experiences can be shared with similar efforts in other countries. We also will continue to develop partnerships with local operators and hotels to build functional circuits in Gabon and to develop ecotourism in the region that protects the environment while meaningfully benefitting local people.

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

We ended up using the grant over 9-month period, rather than 12-months, because our access to a boat was limited. We therefore spent less time at the site and more time in the city where food and transportation costs were significantly higher. We had to rent a boat for many of the site visits, which added considerably to transportation costs (see budget).

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
Tents	132	137	+5	
Coolers	50	48	-2	
Food	1347	1541	+194	Food prices were higher than anticipated because of more time spent in Libreville
Ground Transport	937	1083	+146	More was spent on ground transportation because we did not have consistent access to a boat and had to rent.
Fuel	1319	1019	-300	Less fuel was used than anticipated, because trips to Tsam Tsam were shortened.
Project Manager	1715	1698	-17	
Other Help	500	380	-120	
Total	6000	5906		The difference in totals is due to changing exchange rates. The grant ended up totalling 4.3 million XAF (or 5906 GDP) after all withdrawals were totalled. An exchange rate of 736 XAF/GBP was used for this report, which was the published rate on Aug 2, 2010.

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

Our priority at the moment is to secure funding for our own boat. Not only is boat rental costly, but rented boats have been unreliable as they are rarely available at the scheduled time and often are in states of disrepair. Once we have a boat, more time can be spent at the site devoted to training and developing well-oiled excursions. We are pitching our business plan to local investors and donors and hope to be able to launch a full-scale site with semi-permanent tents by early 2012.

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?

I gave four lectures on the project during the 9-month period, using the RSGF logo, to approximately 120 cruise ship passengers on a luxury cruise along the coast of West Africa. I also mentioned the RSGF grant in all of our applications for further funding and collaborations to foundations and organisations and in pitches to the national government.

11. Any other comments?

We thank you very much for your assistance in getting this project underway!