

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	Dr. Abdul Wakid
Project title	Strengthening the community-based dolphin conservation programme in Brahmaputra river system, India
RSG reference	46.05.09
Reporting period	2009-12
Amount of grant	£25,000
Your email address	Wakid.abdul@gmail.com ; wakid@aaranyak.org
Date of this report	31-07-2012

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
Strengthening the capacity of Dolphin Conservation Network			Fully achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One 75-foot long purpose-built boat constructed in 2009-11. This boat is equipped with six cabins, two engines, two survey platforms, laboratory facilities and all safety and security measures. Required additional funds were raised from MBZSCF and DI. 3rd DCN training, one range-wide Dolphin Yatra (education campaign) and 2011, 2012 Brahmaputra dolphin survey were conducted with the help of this boat. • Advanced training (three numbers) for land-based dolphin and ecosystem monitoring provided to 30 DCN members in total 12 days duration, first training in Feb, 2010, 2nd in March, 2011 and 3rd training in November, 2011. The whole development process came up with a standardised land-based land based dolphin and habitat monitoring protocols and a training manual.
Increasing the effectiveness of Dolphin Conservation Network and improving the information-base of the dolphins, their habitats and threats			Fully achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Dolphin Rapid Response Team (DRRT) established during the project period. This team investigated the dolphin mortality cases during the project period and rescued one carcass, which handed over to the Forest Department for follow up actions. DRRT undertook urgent actions in saving three stranded dolphins in Dikhow River in Eastern Assam in December 2011 to March 2012 in association with the local Forest Department. Initiatives are undertaken to develop a standard dolphin post-mortem protocol and concerned veterinarians capacity development in Assam. • Altogether 1928 land-based dolphin and habitat monitoring conducted

				<p>during the project duration, covering 30 DCN sites with monthly 2 monitoring in the beginning of the project, which was further developed to monthly 4 monitoring from April, 2011. A dedicated DCN Coordinator was coordinating the entire DCN activities. A standard land-based dolphin and ecosystem monitoring protocol with a manual developed during the project period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the critical analysis of our earlier dolphin survey methods, we modified the old survey method, trialled the modified methods and finally came up with a standard Brahmaputra dolphin survey methodology with experts inputs from Zoological Society of London (UK), IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group, Wildlife Institute of India and National Research Institute of Fisheries Engineering (Japan). Since the proposed four surveys annually in the 1050 km dolphin inhabited river stretches of Brahmaputra river system is very expensive and also not practically possible due to very high water in summer season, therefore, we finalised to undertake only one survey per year in winter season with standardised dolphin survey methods. Accordingly, we conducted one trial dolphin survey in the 1050 km dolphin inhabited river stretches of Brahmaputra river system in 2011 with modified survey methodology and conducted the final survey in winter, 2012 with the finalised dolphin survey methodology. This recent survey is bringing many interesting findings on the abundance, distribution, ecology and threats of Brahmaputra river dolphins. Report writing is ongoing. • Dolphin Yatra (community awareness campaign on dolphin conservation)
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				conducted in winter, 2011-12, while our survey boat was moving 900 km upstream of Brahmaputra River, from Dhubri to Sadiya. Altogether 51 programmes were conducted in 49 sites of 15 districts, where 20,375 people participated including 6,066 students. Specially designed EE materials (postures, booklets, drama) were developed and widely used during this Dolphin Yatra.
Developing the DCN as a sustainable conservation programme			Fully achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose-built boat is constructed in such a way that it can be used for dolphin ecotourism. As a trial, we took about 85 local dolphin enthusiasts to show the dolphins by our boat. • A few sites across Assam have been identified as potential dolphin ecotourism sites for the greater benefit of the species and local communities. • DCN members were trained on dolphin details and how to do dolphin ecotourism.

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

The project faced considerable challenges during the beginning of the project with boat construction. Although it was proposed that the boat would be constructed within 3-4 months duration at the beginning of the project, however, due to lack of sufficient skilled labours in Assam, the construction had to wait till August 2010. When we got the required man-power for the boat construction, the unusual heavy rainfall stopped the construction, which further delayed the boat construction by another 4 months. Then the actual work could be started by November 2010 and finally the boat was ready in March 2011 and we did our first boat based dolphin survey in April-May 2011. As a result, we couldn't complete boat based awareness campaign in winter 2011, which was compensated in winter 2012. Likewise, the full fledged boat-based dolphin survey was conducted in winter 2012 although we did a trial survey in the entire 1050 km dolphin inhabited stretch in April-May 2011. The good thing was that within this time we could standardize our dolphin survey methodology as well as quality up gradation of education campaign. This way by taking additional time, we completed the targeted project activities and also could ensure the quality of the targeted outcomes and outputs.

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

- Construction of a well-equipped purpose-built boat for long term Brahmaputra dolphin and ecosystem research and conservation.
- Standardisation of dolphin survey methodology for Brahmaputra river system, which can be used for future dolphin and ecosystem surveys in Brahmaputra to understand the changes in dolphin abundance, distribution, ecology and threats over time.
- A well-designed Dolphin Yatra (mass awareness campaign) where about 20,375 people participated and strong presence of a well-trained and highly motivated community based Dolphin Conservation Network in 30 most important dolphin habitats across Brahmaputra river system, who helped in reducing dolphin mortality by 40% in these sites over last 4 years.

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

This project was mainly on the community involvement in dolphin conservation. Accordingly we involved 30 community members from 30 sites in conserving 'their' dolphins and the wider ecosystem. These 30 community members were trained three times within the project duration with altogether 12 full days in capacity building in land-based dolphin and ecosystem monitoring, dolphin mortality monitoring as well as conducting community awareness campaign. These trained DCN members further conducted informal awareness campaign among the communities of their localities on dolphin and ecosystem conservation. Additionally, 10 of these DCN members were given 2 weeks training course on environmental drama performance, who also participated in winter, 2012 Dolphin Yatra.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The above-mentioned activities undertaken during this project need to be continued for a long lasting impact on the targeted species and its habitats in Brahmaputra river system and therefore, we have the plans to continue the works.

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

The results of the Brahmaputra dolphin survey, 2012 with the help of standardised dolphin survey methodology will be shared through a research paper published in an internationally renowned peer-reviewed journal. The Report writing is ongoing, which will later be transformed into a research article. The community based dolphin conservation efforts will be published in semi-scientific journal.

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

The project duration was November 2009 to October 2011. However, due to the problems in boat construction for the reasons describe above, the boat construction was delayed, which affected in all the boat based activities. As a result, we took additional eight months to complete the targeted tasks. Accordingly, the project was covered a total duration of 2 years and 8 months, from November 2009 to July 2012.

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
Boat construction	7400	6698.97	701.03	Used additional fund from MBZ Species Conservation Fund and Darwin Initiative in these heads, to keep this fund save for other heads.
Boat maintenance	2000	1069.45	930.54	
Boat fuel	2760	2559.13	200.87	
DCN honorarium	3000	3039.86	-39.86	More field days were conducted than estimated, for which this additional fund was used
Staff honorarium	4800	5249.45	-449.45	More field days were conducted than estimated, for which this additional fund used
Dolphin eco-tourism	1000	1000	0	
Emergency fund	500	1328.18	-828.18	More emergency cases were handled than estimated, for which this additional fund was required.
DCN Training	1000	1156.12	-156.12	More training days were used than estimated
Communication	500	500	0	
Contingency	700	1080.45	-380.45	Due to more fieldworks than estimated
Project management and institutional overhead	1340	1340	0	
Total	25000	25,021.61	-21.61	

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

Based on the experiences of the current project and observing the urgent requirements for long term conservation of the species, I feel following works need to be urgently undertaken as a follow up of this project and a long lasting impact of the current project:

- a. One unit comprising of the representatives of all the local stakeholders, needs to be developed in each of the 30 DCN sites with coordination by already trained DCN members. Currently, 30 DCN members are well-trained, highly motivated and dedicated to their mission. However, for a long lasting impact they need to be supported by the local communities. Developing a unit comprising of all different local stakeholders will be a good approach to involve the local community in dolphin and ecosystem conservation. Each of these units need to engage regular monitoring of 'their' dolphins and habitats and undertake conservation measures by their own with active coordination by the local DCN member and guidance by the project team. This will strengthen the community support to the dolphin and ecosystem conservation. Efforts should be made to make these DCN Units sustainable.
- b. Annual boat based dolphin and habitat monitoring survey need to be continued for at least next 2 years through the standardised dolphin survey methodology developed by the current project. Such a survey was completed in February-March 2012, which need to be repeated for next minimum 2 years in the same time, same methods, which will reveal important findings on the Gangetic dolphin population abundance, distribution, ecology and threats for developing a well-defined effective conservation strategy. Such monitoring survey will also help in assessing the impact of ongoing community based dolphin conservation efforts in Brahmaputra.
- c. Annual boat based 'Dolphin Yatra' need to be repeated to engage more the communities and fishermen residing in and around dolphin habitats. One such extensive Dolphin Yatra was conducted in winter 2011-12 with high quality education tools, which need to be repeated at least for next 2 years, so that the awareness message reach to non-reached areas of Brahmaputra Valley.

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?

We used extensively RSGF logo in our education materials. The logo is being used in the posture and the booklet. Both these posture and booklet were transformed into big flexes during the education campaign. Also the logo is being used in the constructed survey boat. RSGF support in boat construction was widely published through Telegraph, a widely published National Daily Newspaper of India.

11. Any other comments?

The project leader is especially thankful to RSGF for this support, especially in the boat construction, which is now a very big asset for Gangetic Dolphin Research and Conservation programme of Aaranyak, for its mission in long term research and conservation of Brahmaputra dolphin.