
The Rufford Foundation: Grant Recipient Conference

THE RUFFORD FOUNDATION HELD ITS “Grant Recipient Conference” in Sabang, Sumatra in January 2014. The conference was organised jointly by Fauna & Flora International and the Rufford Foundation with the main objectives to,

- Provide a forum for grant recipients to discuss ideas, problems, issues and create invaluable networking opportunities; and,
- Increase communication and information between Rufford and its grant recipients.

The participants consisted of 16 Nature award winners from Indonesia ranging from first-time grantees to Booster recipients. The first day was allocated for project presentations, which were designed to highlight the logical progression in project implementation and evolution of project design from the first Rufford Small Grant (RSG) to a second RSG to Booster. The second day involved a field trip to an FFI marine project site, including visiting a mangrove forest rehabilitation site with the local customary marine leader.

The RSG is a relatively small contributor to conservation projects. Nevertheless, RSG have resulted in significant and tangible conservation impacts. Rufford has also enabled early career conservationists to get that all important first start and mobilized sooner than they would have done otherwise. Grant recipients include what is now widely acknowledged conservation officers in Indonesia, many which were participating in the conference, including the co-editor of the *Journal of Indonesian Natural History*, Wilson Novarino. The grantees were engaged in subjects varying from local policy and legislation support, to protecting Malay tapirs and Sumatran tigers, and using gibbons as a flagship species to support income generating activities for local coffee farmers on Java. It also allowed grantees to pursue and test creative and innovative initiatives and disseminate results widely. Finally, one of the most important results of RSG support is that it has enabled grantees to train up a future generation of conservationists, and often focus on critically important species or ecosystems that would otherwise have received little attention.

The conference also aimed at forging new collaborations in Indonesia. It set out to identify and establish areas for collaboration between grantees and increase further

opportunities for collaboration through their own local networks. After two days of information sharing, discussions and deliberations the participants arrived at the following recommendations:

- A future Rufford conference should include grantees from eastern Indonesia and also those focussing on marine issues.
- Indonesia holds the second highest number of RSG project awards but not a single RSG recipient has advanced to the Continuation stage. This was because they had progressed in their career and felt that they were no longer suitable.
- Rufford should include a sub-section or set of guidelines as part of the RSG proposal format to enable project information and dissemination to a wider audience (e.g. IUCN, national parks).
- Rufford should create an alumni network with regional meetings and opportunities for wider peer learning. Also, an electronic Rufford mail-list would enable a global alumni network to connect.
- Conduct a gap analysis to identify locations (e.g. eastern Indonesia) and issues (e.g. marine biodiversity conservation) that are under-represented in RSG.
- Consider setting up a small grants scheme, whereby a pool of student projects (e.g. £1000 each) could be funded under a single RSG capacity building grant of £6000 that is award to the supervisor. This could increase the number of projects and opportunities for early career conservations who will benefit from the experience of initially managing a smaller grant.

The Editors