



Darwin Initiative/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31st October 2019)

Project reference	24-012
Project title	Incentivising community-led marine biodiversity conservation on Atauro Island
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	East Timor
Lead organisation	Blue Ventures Conservation
Partner(s)	Worldfish, Seventythree Ltd, Raja Ampat Local Homestay Business Enterprise Association, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment (Directorate of Biodiversity), Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Arts Culture and Tourism, Government of East Timor
Project leader	Alasdair Harris
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	October 2019 - HYR3
Project website/blog/social media etc.	www.blueventures.org

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).

At the start of the period we were working with six communities (i.e. Beloi, Vila, Biqueli, Ilik-namu, Behau Fatumeta, and Ma'abat). Now we are working in ten communities on the following activities (across all reporting periods):

Table 1: Project activities and the communities where they take place.

Village / Community	Community-led fisheries monitoring	Fisheries management consultations	Fisheries management and LMMA	Ecotourism - based reef monitoring	Community habitat monitoring	Homestays	Other income generating activities through eco-tourism
Beloi, Atauro				X	X	X	X
Vila, Atauro				X			X
Biqueli, Atauro				X	X		X
Ilik-namu, Atauro	X	X		X	X		
Makili, Atauro							X
Behau Fatumeta, Manatuto	X	X	X				X
Ma'abat, Manatuto	X	X					

Behau Lian-lidu, Manatuto*		X					X (discussions)
Behedan, Manatuto*		X					X (discussions)
Madohi, Dili*		X				X (discussions)	

* New sites on the mainland that will be developed after the end of the project

Summary of progress this period below:

1.1 Community consultations on ecotourism homestay workplan and activities at 2-3 villages.

Thanks to the success of our work with homestays in Beloi, community leaders from Madohi, a village on the outskirts of Dili, approached us at the end of 2018 for assistance with homestay development and marine resource management. We have maintained informal communications with the community leaders throughout 2019, and in September were able to start formal discussions with them about providing support. Further community consultations on homestays, as well as marine management, are planned for the end of 2019.

1.2 Community, NGO and wider stakeholder consultations for natural resource management at 2-3 villages, with local consultations consulting both communities and women's groups.

Since initial consultations were completed in Ilik-namu and Behau Fatumeta, two neighbouring communities - Behau Lian-lidu, a second sub-village of Behau, and Behedan, in Manatuto district - have invited us to support them with marine management.

Community consultations to discuss the development and implementation of an LMMA started in Behau Lian-lidu in September (see activity 4.1 for more details). The first community visit to Behedan is scheduled to take place in October.

Additionally, community consultations on marine management are expected to start in Madohi, Dili, by the end of 2019 (see activity 1.1 for more details).

1.3 Train (minimum) 10 community members in habitat monitoring, including use of underwater 360° video.

Complete.

Eleven community members completed a training programme for participatory seagrass monitoring in April 2018. During this reporting period, four training sessions took place to refresh their monitoring skills and provide ongoing technical support to the team, as well as training six new participants.

In addition to community members, we have also started training local organisations so that they can assist with support for community groups and ensure that the project leaves a legacy. In April, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the local NGO *Konservasau Flora no Fauna* (KFF), and agreed to train five of their members in the Reef Check methodology. Training began in June and is expected to be completed by November. The certification will allow KFF to lead reef monitoring programmes to support LMMAs.

Additionally, we hired a local Dive and Science Assistant to replace an international role and increase the local ownership of the programme. He completed his Reef Check training and achieved Eco Diver certification in July 2019.

As previously reported, 360° video was found to be unsuitable for ongoing monitoring purposes. However, some 360° footage that was captured as part of the ecotourist programme is proving to be an effective outreach tool and has been shared with different community groups (see activity 1.7 for more details), with delighted and enthusiastic responses.

1.4 Conduct participatory habitat assessments across southeast and northeast areas of Atauro.

A participatory habitat assessment, using the Seagrass-Watch methodology, was completed in Atauro before this reporting period. The community seagrass monitoring team is now carrying out long-term monitoring of the mapped coastline; however, due to training needs, no monitoring sessions were held in this reporting period in favour of four practice sessions, which were joined by six new participants.

1.5 Train (minimum) 10 community members in fisheries monitoring, simple analysis and presenting information back to communities (minimum 50% women).

In total, 20 women (six from Behau Fatumeta, six from Ma'abat and eight from Ilik-namu) have completed fisheries monitoring training between March 2018 and March 2019.

In July, the female fisheries monitoring teams from Ilik-namu, Behau Fatumeta and Ma'abat came together for a peer-to-peer exchange in Atauro to learn from each other and gain a better understanding through simple analysis of how their fisheries data contributes to LMMA management. Support sessions took place in May, July, August and September with the Ilik-namu team and in April, June, July and August 2019 with the Behau Fatumeta team.

1.6 Establish participatory fisheries monitoring programme in 2-3 villages for duration of project.

Participatory monitoring is now taking place in three villages (Ilik-namu, Behau Fatumeta and Ma'abat). Monitoring is ongoing and conducted several days each week in both communities, according to a survey schedule developed by the teams.

1.7 Disseminate results of participatory monitoring to communities, community leaders and women's groups on Atauro, including through use of 360° VR engagement tools showcasing underwater monitoring footage.

Four data sharing sessions took place between November 2018 and March 2019. Data from the last six months will be shared at the end of 2019.

In addition to formal data sharing sessions, we have taken the opportunity to share results and raise awareness of the importance of the reef during several events:

- [Underwater monitoring footage](#) from Atauro was shared through 360° virtual reality (VR) goggles at three events: in July, during a fisheries monitoring team exchange (see activity 1.5 for more details); in August, at an event in Dili celebrating independence of East Timor, with senior ministerial representatives and NGO staff; and in August with 40 community members during two shark awareness events with an NGO working on shark conservation.
- A [blog and video on coral spawning](#) in East Timor was published on our website in April and shared informally with community members. The rare coral spawning event was witnessed during a coral reef survey with expedition ecotourists.
- In June, we delivered two presentations at the Timor-Leste Study Association (TLSA) conference in Dili attended by representatives from the government, academia and civil society. The presentations covered our experience with community-based monitoring as a tool to empower women and inform marine management plans, as well as our work

with ecotourism and community-based conservation.

2.1 Village level workshops, with communities and women's groups, to discuss fisheries management options based on participatory monitoring data, and discussions on key fisheries and threats.

In September, two initial community consultations took place in a new community, Behau Lianlidu, in response to the community's invitation to assist with marine resource management (see activities 1.2 and 4.1 for more details). We agreed to continue consultations with the community, supporting them to identify their priorities for marine management and develop appropriate measures accordingly.

2.2. One key fishery selected for trial management measure through further consultations with communities and women's groups, with minimum 1 village.

Complete but ongoing as new communities approach us. Ilik-namu and Behau Fatumeta decided the key fisheries they wanted to manage before the reporting period (e.g. cuttlefish, tuna and fusilier).

2.3 Work plan agreed upon with community – including women's groups – for timeline for local fisheries management (eg. location, duration, rules).

A work plan was approved in Behau Fatumeta before the reporting period and in May, the community decided to extend the six-month temporary closure established in December 2018 to a full two-year cycle (see activity 4.3 for more details).

A work plan was proposed in Ilik-namu in 2017, but its implementation stalled due to internal political conflict. These conversations are ongoing.

2.4 Support provided to community and women's groups for implementation of workplan.

Between April and September, nine support meetings were held with the LMMA coordination group in Behau Fatumeta to assist the group with the administration, management and surveillance of the LMMA. During these meetings, we supported the group with generating new ideas for alternative livelihoods and finding funding for it (see activities 4.3 and 4.6 for more details).

2.5 Results of management measure evaluated with the community and improvements suggested and implemented.

As management measures (i.e. a two-year full no-take zone and a six-month temporary fisheries closure) were only implemented in Behau Fatumeta in December 2018, it is not yet possible to fully evaluate their impact. Nevertheless, the community of Behau Fatumeta decided to extend the timeframe of their temporary closure to the full two-year cycle based on their experiences of the trial closure.

In April, a comprehensive biomass survey was undertaken in Behau Fatumeta to establish a baseline that will allow us to adopt an adaptive approach, with monitoring data being reviewed regularly to adapt management measures. The two-day biomass survey was planned to be completed before the implementation of management measures, but was delayed as high winds in January and February made crossing the channel between Atauro (where our boat and dive equipment are stored) and the mainland too dangerous.

2.6 Twice yearly outreach events with wider community – men and women – to disseminate results from local management and monitoring.

See activity 1.7 for a report of our dissemination activities.

3.1 First round of homestay participants selected.

Complete in 2016, with eight households selected in Beloi.

3.2 Homestay Association set up with legal paperwork completed, with equal representation of women within Association board.

The registration process for AHA, which began in 2017 and was delayed due to political instability, was completed in September. This is a remarkable achievement, as we have been told that political instability and complicated bureaucracy are generally considered a virtually insurmountable barrier to registration, and will result in Blue Ventures ecotourists being able to use the homestays again. The board comprises 15 people: eight women and seven men. Their success was published in the Timorese government's official gazette, the '*Jornal da Republica*', in September.

3.3 Business plans developed and standards for homestays agreed upon.

Complete; business plans and standards were agreed on by the eight participating families in 2017 and regularly reviewed during support meetings.

3.4 Participate in exchange trip to Raja Ampat, Indonesia, to meet and learn from a successful homestay group.

Complete; a short [video](#) describing the exchange was completed in July and shared with the communities and online. Lessons shared by the Raja Ampat group are being applied to the daily running of AHA, and AHA is reflecting on whether to adopt a booking system similar to Stay Raja Ampat.

3.5 Training given on key areas such as health and safety, budget management, tourist expectations, ecoguiding etc

Overall, all 15 AHA members are becoming increasingly more confident in hosting guests from diverse cultural backgrounds and with specific requirements (e.g. dietary needs).

In May, two AHA members attended a workshop on health and food safety for hospitality providers hosted by USAID, and in June, we delivered a training workshop on safe food preparation for six AHA women. As the result of ongoing cooking training, ecotourists have been providing positive feedback on the quality of food provided by the homestays, mentioning both the flavours and the nutritional value as the highlight.

In August, we trained and mentored the AHA Coordinator in public speaking, to prepare him for his role as a panel member during the launch of the Marine Tourism Association of Timor-Leste.

In September, we provided training to the eight homestay families on customer service, including welcoming guests and giving them a tour of the house. The training will continue in October.

3.6 Ongoing support to Homestay Association through monthly meetings focusing on continuous improvement through feedback, and facilitated induction of first guests.

We continue to hold formal meetings with AHA on a monthly basis to discuss progress, issues and future development. These are supported by weekly phone calls and informal meetings.

Additionally, we continue to support AHA to develop their marketing and become an independent and viable business, advertising the homestays in Dili and facilitating visits by NGO staff and travel groups. In July, we facilitated AHA to host a group of 17 participants from an Engineers Without Borders programme, and provided support prior to and during the visit. The participants were all very positive about the hospitality received.

In September, we supported AHA to run a promotional stall at the International Tourism Fair, in Dili, hosted by the USAID Tourism For All project. This was a one-day event attended by hundreds of Timorese youth, interested in working in the tourism sector and locally based tourism providers, and AHA's participation will result in raising the profile of the homestays, potentially leading to more local customers. Since the homestay programme started in 2017, AHA has hosted 3,129 nights, for a total income of USD across the eight participating families.

3.7 Workshops with further villages for subsequent expansion of homestay association.

Homestay expansion discussions started in 2018, and proved quite difficult as they resulted in conflict between AHA and some community members who wished to join. This reporting period we continued to work closely with AHA, local authorities, and the wider community to defuse the conflict. Further expansion will depend on the outcomes of the discussions and the availability of a market to support new homestays.

However, in order to increase and spread the economic benefits from our ecotourism programme amongst the wider community, we are developing new community-led activities for ecotourists to take part in. We continued overnight visits to Adara, on the western side of the island, and have trialled visits to the nearby communities of Atekru and Biqueli. We worked with the communities of Biqueli, Makili and Beloi in offering community-led workshops on cooking, seaweed cake making (using seaweed farmed by community members using traditional methods), breadmaking and weaving. These activities received positive feedback from ecotourists and we will develop them further in the next reporting period.

A homestay best practice manual is currently being developed with WWF and 73Ltd to share lessons learned in establishing homestays. The aim of this is to support more communities and NGOs to replicate this approach, and will be finalised in October. A digital copy will be freely available on our website.

4.1 Workshops with community (from activities 2.2 to 2.5) and women's groups to discuss potential benefits of developing an LMMA and locally relevant mechanisms for management (eg. Tara Bandu).

Workshops in Ilik-namu and Behau Fatumeta were completed before this reporting period (see these recent blogs, "Taking control with *Tara Bandu*", [part 1](#) and [part 2](#), for more information).

In September, two workshops took place as a result of the request of the community of Behau Lian-lidu to introduce ourselves and our work as a preliminary step to discussing how we can support them on marine resource management. Fifty-five community members, including 15 women, attended the first meeting and 60, including 15 women, attended the second. We will continue discussions with the community in the second half of 2019, supporting them to identify their priorities for marine management and jointly develop appropriate measures accordingly.

In Ilik-namu, due to pre-existing internal community conflict, the LMMA formalisation process stalled in 2018. Following a data sharing session in November 2018 and a follow-up data sharing meeting in March 2019, community members verbalised interest in resuming the consultations. We will continue to engage the community of Ilik-namu in discussions on marine management in the next reporting period.

4.2 Training in LMMA management and what it means for the village, including exchange trips to the village of Adara to meet other villages engaged in LMMAs, with minimum 50% participation by women.

In Behau Fatumeta, formal training workshops for the LMMA management committee, covering topics such as governance and reef ecology, were postponed, as the community requested that we focus our efforts on supporting the expansion of regulations to include tourism regulations first (see activity 4.6 for more details).

In July, the three female fisheries monitoring teams from Ilik-namu, Behau Fatumeta and Ma'abat came together for a peer-to-peer exchange in Atauro to share experiences and gain a better understanding of how their fisheries data contributes to LMMA management.

4.3 Workshops to decide on LMMA criteria (eg. size, zoning, rules), with minimum 50% participation by women.

In May, the community of Behau Fatumeta decided to extend the six-month temporary closure established in December 2018 to a full two-year cycle, which confirms the community's positive attitude towards marine management. The community also started discussing the need for additional regulations establishing tourist access fees to the LMMA (see activity 4.6 for more details).

In September, initial discussions with communities took place in Behau Lian-lidu, to introduce Blue Ventures and our work in neighbouring Behau Fatumeta (see activity 4.1 for more details), with 32% female attendance. More structured and gender-focused consultations are planned for the next reporting period.

4.4 Workshops to draft a local management plan for the LMMA, with minimum 50% participation by women.

An LMMA management plan was formalised using *Tara Bandu* local laws in Behau Fatumeta, before the reporting period.

The draft management plan for the Ilik-namu LMMA is pending formal approval by community leaders.

4.5 Delineation of LMMA and outreach by communities.

One LMMA covering 225 m² was delineated in Behau Fatumeta in 2018.

Delineation was completed in Ilik-namu in 2017 and is pending formal approval.

4.6 Support on any required administration with Ministries.

In order to ensure the support of the relevant ministries to coastal communities engaged in marine management, we continue to build positive relationships with the ministries responsible for environment, fisheries and tourism through regular meetings, phone calls and data sharing sessions.

In May, we facilitated three meetings between the village chief of Behau Fatumeta and the Ministry of Tourism to discuss introducing an access fee for divers and snorkellers in the waters surrounding the community. The ministry was very supportive of the idea, and showed great enthusiasm towards facilitating community-led tourism development in Behau. As the result of these meetings, we supported the community to prepare a proposal to the ministry, requesting funds to develop small ecotourism businesses and basic tourism infrastructure (e.g. food stalls, toilets and shaded seating areas), which will be submitted in October.

In July, we presented our progress with community-led marine management and monitoring to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), and explored new partnership opportunities, which will be further discussed by the end of 2019.

In August, we were invited to attend the first national conservation coordination meeting co-chaired by the ministries responsible for fisheries and the environment to coordinate work in protected areas. In September, we were invited as one of three NGO conservation partners to partake in the consultations for the management structure of the marine protected area network on Atauro.

In September, Blue Ventures supported three female Timorese MAF staff with presenting Blue Ventures gender and fisheries work in East Timor at the Coral Triangle Initiative's Women Leaders Forum in Bali, Indonesia.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

One of the AHA members (a male head of household) unexpectedly passed away in August, which put a temporary hold on activities between Blue Ventures and AHA. However, the recent formal registration status of AHA brought back a spirit of enthusiasm and excitement, and a positive outlook for the future.

With the recent formal registration status of AHA, the association has now the full legal authority to start hosting Blue Ventures ecotourists again. After a period of awareness raising within the wider community about the change in legal status, we expect that Blue Ventures ecotourists will be using the homestays from October onwards.

2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS: **No**

Formal change request submitted: **No**

Received confirmation of change acceptance **No**

3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?

Yes No Estimated underspend: £

3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully. Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

No