



**Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects
Half Year Report
(due 31st October 2020)**

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, Government of East Timor - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment (Directorate of Biodiversity), • Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, • Ministry of Arts Culture and Tourism,
Project leader	Alasdair Harris
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	October 2020 - HYR4
Project website/blog/social media	www.blueventures.org

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

Currently, we are supporting 11 communities in various capacities ranging from community-led fisheries monitoring to other income-generating activities through eco-tourism (across all reporting periods):

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

Community name	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		

Adara, Atauro							X
Makili, Atauro							X
Behau Fatumeta, Manatuto	X	X	X				X
Behau Lian-lidu, Manatuto	X	X					X (discussions)
Behedan, Manatuto		X					X (discussions)
Ma'abat, Manatuto	X	X					
Beto Tasi, (Madohi), Dili		X				X	X

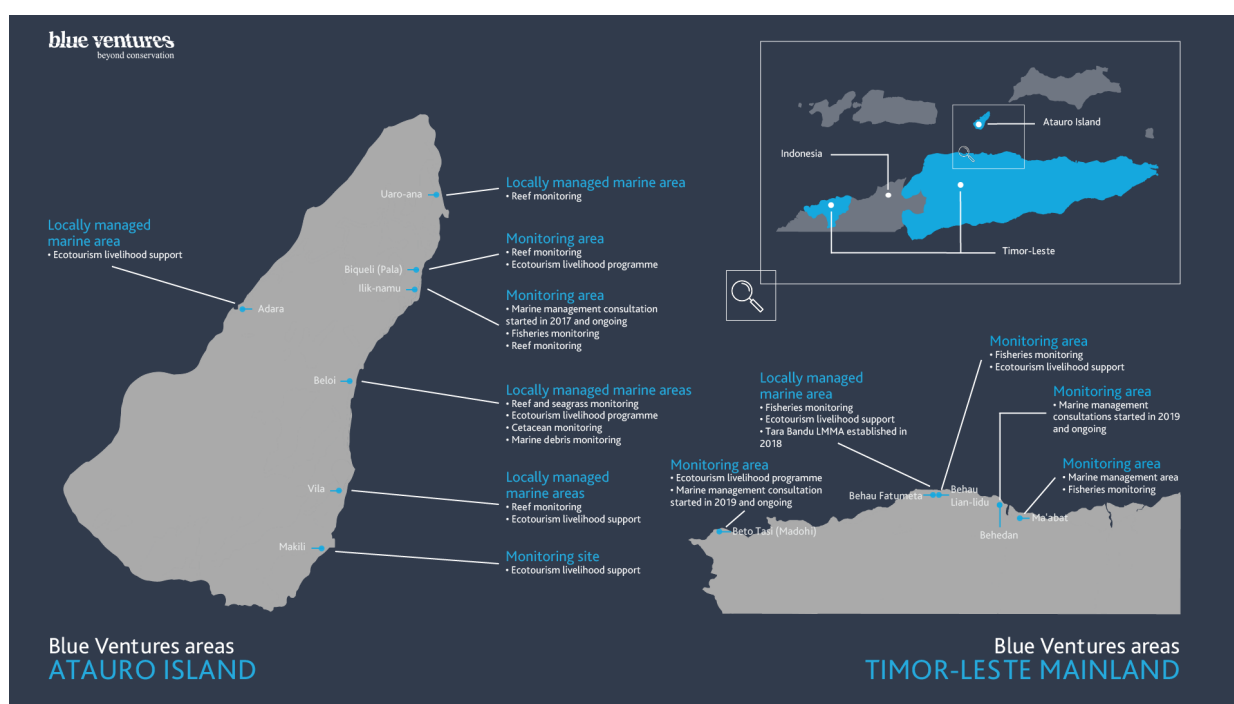


Figure 1: Map of East Timor and Blue Ventures sites of implementation

Summary of progress this period below:

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

The community of Beto Tasi (Madohi, near Dili) previously approached us for assistance with homestay development after the success of our work in Beloi. Following formal discussions with the community leaders, from August 2020 we have successfully supported the community in establishing 10 homestays (at the time of writing all 10 homestays are operational) and 10 other ecotourism businesses, such as restaurants, tour guiding, transport services and laundry. Due to match-funding loss due to COVID-19, supporting AHA to design a booking platform has been postponed until after the end of the project (see 3.5 for more details). Further support is ongoing.

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.

Completed in Behau Fatumeta and Ilik-namu before the reporting period. Community consultations focusing on marine resource management were planned for this reporting period in Behau Lian-lidu, Beto Tasi (Madohi), Ma'abat and Behedan. However, with delays due to COVID-19, these will now be conducted in 2021. We are still planning an exchange visit to Behau Lian-lidu in the next reporting period, in the hope that the village will designate a *Tara Bandu* governed LMMA similar to Behau Fatumeta.

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

Completed in April 2018 and previously reported on.

During the reporting period, we established a plan to transition to Timorese led, scuba-based reef monitoring of the locally managed marine area (LMMA) around Atauro and in Behau. We trained five Konservasaun Flora No Fauna (KFF) members in snorkel-based Reef Check methodology, so that they can support ecological data collection at the project sites. Building on this, our Timorese Conservation Officer commenced his theoretical training for Reef Check EcoDiver certification, which is ongoing. Our Community Liaison Officer, who is also East Timor's first female Divemaster, is currently undergoing her Reef Check EcoDiver Trainer training which, once certified, will allow her to certify future Reef Check EcoDivers. Practical in-water scuba diving and Reef Check training for both the Conservation Officer and Community Liaison Officer will be possible once certified expatriate staff are able to return to East Timor.

Although unsuitable for monitoring purposes, 360° video has consistently proved to be an effective outreach tool for various community engagements (see activity 1.7 for more details).

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. Due to reduced staff capacity and various restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no monitoring or practice sessions took place this reporting period, but these are planned for the next reporting period.

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

Complete.

20 women (six from both Behau Fatumeta and Ma'abat, and eight from Ilik-namu) completed fisheries monitoring training and an additional eight women from Behau Lian-lidu started their training prior to the reporting period.

Scheduled training for the Ma'abat (in basic data interpretation) and Behau Lian-lidu (in fisheries monitoring) groups was not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings of people but the groups were supported through regular WhatsApp communication and Zoom calls (refer to 2.4 for more detail). The scheduled in-person training will be conducted in the next reporting period.

Due to the delays caused by COVID-19, the exchange visit between all four CFM groups to share their experiences and attend a new training in data visualisation that was scheduled in Y4 will now take place beyond the timeline of this project.

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

Complete.

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

Monitoring activities were impacted by COVID-19, especially in Behau Fatumeta and Ilik-namu. In both these villages, data were consistently collected until the end of April, and resumed in September, with sporadic collections in the interim months.

In Ma'abat, collection of data proceeded on a more regular basis with Community Fisheries Monitoring (CFM) members reporting fewer interruptions as a result of COVID-19.

Establishing and training the fourth CFM group in Behau Lian-lidu is scheduled for the next reporting period.

In order to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on fisheries in East Timor, our team conducted two rounds of phone-based questionnaire surveys with respondents from the different communities we support. The results of the first round of surveys, conducted in April/May 2020, have been published in an [infographic](#). We are currently analysing the results of the second round of surveys conducted in August/September. In addition, both these infographics will be translated into Tetun, to be shared with the communities as part of our data sharing sessions (see 1.7).

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.

Despite COVID-19 delaying plans to formally conduct data sharing sessions in communities, we have taken every opportunity to share and discuss results and help raise awareness of the importance of reef and seagrass ecosystems during informal discussions. These have been conducted over various events that were conducted with strict COVID-19 safety precautions in place:

- Underwater monitoring footage from Atauro was shared through 360° virtual reality (VR) goggles at a week-long tourism fair in September promoting local tourism in-country (given the decline of international tourism due to COVID-19).
- Members of the Beto Tasi (Madohi) community attended a three-day event facilitated by Blue Ventures in Atauro in September, to learn from the experiences of the Atauro Homestay Association (AHA) and six other ecotourism entrepreneurs. Part of this event included a 'marine conservation and natural resource management' workshop, where members from Atauro's seagrass monitoring and CFM groups were invited to share their experiences. This was followed by a brainstorming session to discuss Beto Tasi (Madohi) marine resource use.
- In a [blog](#) published on our website in July, our Conservation Officer details his conservation journey, to motivate Timorese youth to become involved in marine resource management.
- In a [blog](#) published on our website in August, our Acting Country Manager details his experience leading the COVID-19 response as a conservation and fisheries management organisation in East Timor and managing a dedicated all-Timorese team.

We made good progress in preparing a comprehensive data report, analysing results from participatory fisheries monitoring and reef monitoring (from our now dormant ecotourism

programme) over the past three years (2017-2019). The report (with easy-to-understand infographics) will be complete by the end of the project, and will be shared with the wider community as a basis to make more informed decisions with regard to fisheries management.

During the next reporting period, and if the COVID-19 situation allows for larger events (larger than those listed above), data from the last six months will be shared during our regular data sharing events. In addition to the participatory monitoring data, the data sharing sessions will comprise data collected from community members to assess the response of communities to the pandemic.

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.

With the COVID-19 crisis and the State of Emergency announced in the country on 27 March, international borders closed and global fish consumption decreased due to the lack of presence of international buyers. In general fish prices decreased, leading to a reduced income for fishers (fish prices subsequently increased as demand continued to reduce). Government restrictions on fishing activities further impacted the fisheries sector.

The Behau Fatumeta *Tara Bandu* LMMA was originally established in December 2018 as a No Take Zone (NTZ), with its status to be reviewed in December 2020. The community of Behau Fatumeta invited us to two community meetings to discuss emergency measures to increase income in the light of COVID-19-related developments in July/August. During these meetings, we provided technical guidance regarding the possible impacts of a temporary/early opening of the *Tara Bandu* LMMA, including possible short and long term steps, and potential scenarios regarding the LMMA. Eventually, the community decided to reopen their *Tara Bandu* LMMA for day-time fishing, and agreed that the reopening would be temporary (for six months). The official reopening ceremony took place on the 15th September.

In Behau Lian-lidu and Beto Tasi (Madohi), plans to continue community consultations and trial fisheries management measures were delayed due to COVID-19 but will be picked up again in the next reporting period

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

Complete in Ilik-namu and Behau Fatumeta but ongoing as new communities approach us for support with fisheries management. The community in Behau Fatumeta discussed and formalised fisheries management measures in December 2018, focused on several key fisheries, including cuttlefish, lobster, grouper, fusilier and tuna, to manage in the designated LMMA (see 4.5).

Final formalisations in Ilik-namu stalled due to internal political conflict (see 2.3), which still continues.

2.3 Workplan agreed upon with community – including women's groups – for timeline for local fisheries management (e.g. location, duration, rules).

Complete. A work plan was approved in Behau Fatumeta before the reporting period.

A work plan was proposed in Ilik-namu in 2017, but its implementation was stalled due to internal political conflict, which still continues. This community represents some of our most active marine/ocean advocates (e.g. via the CFM groups) and we will continue to work with them within this capacity and re-engage with them about LMMA management if possible. However we do not hope for a change in the workplan status within this project.

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

The workplan for Behau Fatumeta has been implemented since December 2018.

Monthly support meetings have continued for all four CFM groups, either in-person or digitally (through WhatsApp). With all group members now possessing smartphones, the decision was made to install Zoom for each CFM group member to aid communication. Zoom has now been installed for all members of the Ma'abat CFM group, with plans to install it for the Atauro and Behau groups in the next reporting period.

Regular phone calls with the coordinator of the LMMA coordination group in Behau Fatumeta were held during April and July (during the strictest COVID-19 related restrictions) to assist the group with administration, management and surveillance of the LMMA. Once face-to-face meetings could re-start, our in-country team met twice in person to provide technical guidance regarding the closure of the *Tara Bandu* LMMA (see 2.1).

However, due to the COVID-19 crisis and reduced income, the community decided to reopen the closure as an emergency measure (see 2.1). Following community consultations, it was decided that this would be for a period of six months from 15 September 2020.

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

A second biomass survey in Behau Fatumeta, scheduled for late 2020, following from a comprehensive two-day biomass survey conducted in April 2019 to establish a baseline, was postponed due to interruptions due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

With the reopening of the closure (see 2.1) another round of surveys will be conducted in 2021 to establish a second baseline for subsequent data collection, which will enable us to evaluate appropriate management measures. Once the second survey is complete, we will be able to compare the data and analyse trends and share the results with the communities (outside of this project period).

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.

Completed in 2016, with eight households selected in Beloi.

Following a community-led selection process, 20 families were selected by the Beto Tasi (Madohi) community, whom we will be supporting in different capacities (see 1.1).

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

As previously reported, the registration process for the AHA was completed in 2019, and the formal registration certification was issued in October 2019.

The newly established Beto Tasi (Madohi) group will be supported in the registration process beyond the duration of this project.

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 Beloi in 2017 and regularly reviewed during support meetings.

The new Beto Tasi (Madohi) group is currently discussing their business plans and standards. We will continue to provide support to both groups beyond the duration of the project to ensure that standards are met and adhered to (see 3.5).

3.4 Participate in an 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 2019 and shared with the communities and online. Lessons shared by the Raja Ampat group are being applied to the daily running of AHA, and we will be supporting AHA in adopting a booking platform similar to Stay Raja Ampat (see 3.5).

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

All meetings hosted by Blue Ventures since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic follow strict health and safety policies, including providing handwashing stations and hand sanitisers, encouraging the use of face masks, and taking place in larger venues to allow social distancing and reducing attendee numbers. These principles are openly discussed and explained to attendees as a best practice example and to encourage integration in day-to-day operations. Advice was provided to AHA on how to run their eco-tourism enterprises during the pandemic, and we will continue to support them as the COVID-19 situation evolves in-country.

Between the 17th and 19th September, we facilitated a peer-to-peer learning exchange for the 20 selected families from Beto Tasi (Madohi) to travel to Atauro and interact and learn from the AHA and six other community-based ecotourism enterprises. This included 'Rara'a Trational Atauro', the women's group from Biqueli supported by Blue Ventures, that offers workshops in seaweed cake making and cooking other traditional food. Members of AHA shared their experience of starting the homestay business, and what skills they gained, including how to provide a good level of hospitality to tourists. They spoke from their experience of what activities tourists like to engage in. We also facilitated a marine conservation and natural resource management workshop (1.7) to discuss ideas around Beto Tasi (Madohi) marine resource utilisation, as well as coordinated visits to local businesses. Although this exchange was intended for the Beto Tasi (Madohi) participants to learn from the communities in Atauro, the latter also identified this as an opportunity to learn from the former. We are working towards this exchange to be the start of an ongoing mentoring and collaborative partnership between all communities involved.

AHA, the Beto Tasi (Madohi) group and the Rara'a Trational Atauro group continued their collaborative efforts by attending the week-long Tourism Fair organised in Dili (see 1.7). This was an opportunity to promote their businesses to local tourists given the recent decline in international tourists, as well as to get to know and learn from other community-based tourism enterprises around East Timor.

Following the visit in February 2020 by the technical expert of the Stay Raja Ampat community-owned booking platform and a representative of our Indonesian partner organisation Yapeka, we are committed to supporting AHA in designing and developing a booking platform to help bolster ecotourism. The new Beto Tasi (Madohi) group can be added to this booking platform once the homestay businesses are fully established. However, owing to match-funding loss due to COVID-19, this has been postponed until after the end of the project.

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 extend our support to the AHA to discuss progress and avenues for further development. During the strictest COVID-19 related restrictions (in April to June), we liaised with AHA via phone calls and WhatsApp until regular monthly meetings could resume. Our endeavour is to support AHA to develop their marketing and become a fully independent and

viable business (for more details see 3.5). We plan to provide similar support to the newly selected homestay families in Beto Tasi (Madohi).

As reported (in 1.7 and further elaborated on in 3.5), this period we supported the AHA and the Beto Tasi (Madohi) and Rara'a Trational Atauro groups to run promotional stalls at the Tourism Fair, which was held in Dili in September, and hosted by the USAID *Tourism For All* project. This week-long event was attended by hundreds of Timorese, including many young people who are interested in working in the tourism sector and with locally-based tourism providers. We anticipate that the AHA's participation in this fair will help raise the visibility of the homestays and potentially lead to more local customers. Given that this event focused on national rather than international tourism (due to COVID-19), we believe that this will provide a strong incentive, especially to AHA and the Beto Tasi (Madohi) group, to take steps towards eventual financial independence.

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

Following interest from and consultations with the community of Beto Tasi (Madohi) in 2019, it was determined that the homestay model was a feasible option for them. An intensive period of consultations and workshops commenced in August 2020, including providing an in-depth account of the responsibilities and obligations of having ecotourism activities in the village to community and religious leaders, and discussions on how eco-tourism income can contribute to positive conservation outcomes (such as funding LMMA management costs).

As a result, the community of Beto Tasi (Madohi) selected 20 representative families who we will support in various capacities (see 1.1). Follow-up meetings were conducted to discuss the workplan, and a learning exchange was organised for Beto Tasi (Madohi) representative families to meet with the AHA (see 3.5) in September 2020. Two female representatives from Beto Tasi (Madohi) also represented the community at the Tourism Fair (see 3.5) in September and we are currently exploring other opportunities in Beto Tasi (Madohi) for income generation through ecotourism.

In February 2020, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the NGO [Empreza Di'ak](#) to trial additional tourism handicraft workshops that could improve tourist accessibility to community activities and also generate additional income (Activity 3.5). Activities under this MoU are currently on hold due to the partner organisation's funding situation for these activities following COVID-19.

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.

While the workshops and consultations in Behau Fatumeta led to the establishment of a *Tara Bandu* LMMA, in contrast 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 but there continues to be a political conflict, as described under 2.3.

As part of the homestay workshops in Beto Tasi (Madohi) and homestay learning exchange between the Beto Tasi (Madohi) and Atauro groups in Atauro in September, intensive discussions took place focusing on the ecotourism businesses' potential positive contribution to marine conservation and the benefits a LMMA could bring to the fishing community. As a result, the Beto Tasi (Madohi) community members indicated a strong interest in further workshops to discuss a possible LMMA *Tara Bandu* in more detail, which is scheduled to take place before the end of the project.

Planned marine resource management consultations in Behau Lian-lidu and Behedan were delayed due to COVID-19 related restrictions on domestic travel and gatherings.

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.

Training on how to manage a LMMA is ongoing, as previously reported. Support and technical advice were provided to the Behau Fatumeta *Tara Bandu* LMMA management group during this reporting period to fully understand the implications on fish stock of temporarily opening the *Tara Bandu* LMMA for six months for day-time fishing (see 2.1 and 2.4).

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

More structured and gender-focused marine resource management consultations that were planned for Behau Lian-lidu and Beto Tasi (Madohi) could not take place due to COVID-19 restrictions but 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, due to the ongoing community conflict (see 2.3).

Marine resource management consultations in Behau Lian-lidu and Beto Tasi (Madohi) were delayed and hence trialling of fisheries management measures to establish a *Tara Bandu* area will likely take place after the end of the project.

4.5 Delineation of LMMA and outreach by communities.

One LMMA covering 225 m² was delineated in Behau Fatumeta in 2018. See 2.1 for more information.

Delineation was completed in Ilik-namu in 2017 and is pending formal approval but due to the ongoing community conflict (see 2.3 for more information).

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 the environment, fisheries and tourism through regular meetings, phone calls and data sharing sessions.

Due to the State of Emergency announced in March, ministries ceased their routine functions for a few months. However, our team has been liaising with the three ministries on a sustained basis, in particular the Ministry of Fisheries (MAF) and Ministry of Tourism to help progress our renewed MoU negotiations.

Our in-country team has met with MAF representatives for Dili, Atauro and Manatuto on multiple occasions. We attended events hosted by MAF, including an event to launch the sustainable whale watching guidelines on World Oceans Day on the 8th June 2020 and a national coordination meeting to determine the 2020-2023 priority programmes of the

Secretariat of Fisheries and MAF on the 11th September 2020. Blue Ventures (who are part of the governing body) supported the Tour Operator Assosiasaun Turizmu Maritima Timor-Leste (ATM-TL) to develop voluntary certification for operators to adhere to these guidelines (see supporting document 1, Press release by ATM-TL). We have been liaising with the municipality representatives of MAF about the temporary opening of the *Tara Bandu* LMMA in Behau Fatumeta and as a result we were invited to the quarterly development agency meeting in Manatuto (hosted by MAF) for the first time, which will take place in October.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for Covid-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

After supporting the eco-tourism entrepreneurs in Atauro for over three years, we have begun to see and experience significantly greater levels of confidence in the eco-tourism entrepreneurs and an increased level of community pride. The Beto Tasi (Madohi)/Atauro homestay learning exchange provided an opportunity to acknowledge the achievements of the communities on Atauro, and more specifically the AHA and other ecotourism entrepreneurs. This event amplified and showcased community pride in Atauro as they have now acquired expertise in eco-tourism best practices to share with other communities in East Timor. Additionally, some of the eco-tourism activities and their achievements have received greater recognition from community leaders, such as the 'Rara'a Trational Atauro' group, where the village leaders showed their support by attending this traditional food workshop for the first time.

As communicated with and approved by LTS International, a logframe change request made with six individual changes (see supporting documents 2, Change request, and 3, Change request logframe). Three of the changes (updated indicators 0.1, 3.1 and 3.2) were encouraged in the feedback from Darwin to our third annual report (2019/20). One of the changes was as a result of COVID-19 (see more under 2b) while the other five requests were focused around Blue Ventures' approach as an organisation and our core value of 'community first'. The changes will not affect the budget and timeline of the project activities.

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of COVID-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Residual impact

While the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions have had a severe impact on the day-to-day operations of the Blue Ventures' East Timor team, we are confident that we are able to deliver all outstanding project activities within budget and by the end of Y4 with the exception of the following.

- Frequency of data sharing events will be reduced until it is safe to host large gatherings again (Activity 1.7 and Activity 2.6, indicators 1.5 and 2.2).
- Marine resource management consultations in Behau Lian-lidu, Beto Tasi (Madohi) and Behedan were delayed and hence piloting of fisheries management measures in Behau Lian-lidu and Beto Tasi (Madohi) to establish a *Tara Bandu* area will likely take place after the project (Activity 1.2 and 2.1; Indicators 2.1, 2.2).
- Dive-based biomass surveys of the potential new LMMA site and a repeat survey of the Behau Fatumeta LMMA will be delayed until safe medivac options to a hyperbaric chamber are available again. There will therefore be a gap in survey data (Indicator 0.4).
- Collaboration with [Empreza Di'ak](#) and Asosiasaun Turizmu Koleku Mahanak Atauro (ATKOMA) to develop further community-led eco-tourism initiatives is currently on hold due to the partner organisation's funding situation for these activities (Activity 3.7).

In addition, so we can respond to the acute needs of our partner communities and in-country staff, we will be reprioritising the following five areas within the existing budget and through match funding.

- More training of community members in alternative livelihoods and business skills to increase their household incomes and reduce the threat of LMMAs being discontinued.
- More training of community members and Timorese staff in snorkeling/scuba diving and underwater reef monitoring (in the absence of our expeditions for volunteers that normally support this) to ensure communities continue to have access to and ownership of the information and can make informed fisheries management decisions (currently seeking match-funding).
- More one-on-one mentoring, coaching and leadership training of Timorese colleagues to enable greater autonomy.
- To allow for adequate social distancing and a safe workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic, we will be moving to a larger office in Dili in November 2020.
- Scoping of non-tourism dependent livelihoods to increase the economic resilience of our community partners (match-funding).

COVID-19 Pandemic

While East Timor has not recorded any community transmission of the virus, the impact on the economy and food security has been severe. Borders remain closed. The true long-term implications of COVID-19 are still to become apparent as work continues.

Fisheries

We undertook phone surveys in six communities to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the small-scale fishing sector (the results from May can be found [here](#), September's results are currently being analysed). The community of Behau Fatumeta decided to open the *Tara Bandu* LMMA for six months for day-time fishing. We are monitoring the impacts of this on the fishery and reef, as it is a potentially powerful illustration of the value that protected areas can accrue as a 'community bank' to support fishers in times of need. We are hopeful that this experience will help strengthen community support for marine protection within LMMAs.

Tourism/Indicator 0.1

In the absence of international tourism, we have mitigated the impact by adjusting our activities to focus on national tourism (indicator 0.1). We have supported existing ecotourism groups to promote themselves as part of the 'Hau Nia Timor-Leste' campaign - a large-scale campaign currently rolled out nationwide targeting domestic tourism. We also established a second homestay group on the mainland in Beto Tasi (Madohi) on the outskirts of the capital Dili. This enables the continuation of this important income-generating activity, that can be easily re-focused to a wider international market once the impacts of COVID-19 have subsided (outside of the project's timeframe).

To lay the foundations for future community-based cetacean tourism, we will support the development of a voluntary certification for operators to adhere to sustainable whale tourism guidelines (see supporting document 1, Press release by ATM-TL outlining new whale tourism guidelines) that will be launched in the next reporting period.

Our own eco-tourism expedition model has been discontinued since March. The absence of expedition-led coral reef monitoring has led us to establish a new programme to train more community members in scuba diving and underwater reef monitoring to enable critical data collection to continue. This will enable greater sustainability and community ownership of the monitoring going forward.

Team

The State of Emergency in East Timor resulted in strict gathering and movement restrictions for two months, but subsequent State of Emergency restrictions have been less strict, and our in-

country team has been able to undertake community activities under the 'new normal' since June/July. With COVID-19 related restrictions and our responsibility to follow safe practices, extra planning was required to ensure involvement and participation of all interested community members. In some instances, it was necessary for meetings to be repeated twice in the same day (with the same agenda) to keep attendance levels to a maximum of 25 participants per session. This resulted in our team having a very high workload but allowed for more active participation via smaller groups.

All expatriate staff were repatriated in March 2020. The Country Manager gained permission to return to East Timor in October but the remaining three expatriate staff will continue to support the team remotely with project management advice, strategic planning and one-on-one mentoring from their countries of origin. While the effectiveness of the team is constrained by remote working arrangements, a hugely positive outcome of this is that our [Timorese leadership](#) has strengthened, and the team is now more sustainably set up and [stronger than before](#).

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

Discussed with LTS: **Yes**

Formal change request submitted: **Yes**

Received confirmation of change acceptance **Yes**

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. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

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

No

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but **should also** be raised with LTS International through a Change Request. **Please DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk. The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**