

Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31st October 2017)

Project reference	24-020
Project title	Realising the values and benefits for communities of Nicaragua's Turtles
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Nicaragua
Lead organisation	Fauna & Flora International (FFI)
Partner(s)	Fundación LIDER National Sea Turtle Conservation Network (NTCN) Nicaraguan Tourism Chamber (CANATUR) Dr Carolin Lusby, Florida International University (FIU) Jose Urteaga, Stanford University
Project leader	Edgard Herrera
Report date and number	31 Oct 2017 – HYR1
Project website/blog/social media etc.	www.fauna-flora.org/explore/nicaragua/ (NB. FFI website is under reconstruction) NTCN Facebook page - tortugas.nicas.7 - e.g. posts regarding student projects: www.facebook.com/tortugas.nicas.7/photos/a.349924418535630.1073741828.348966155298123/636469689881100/?type=3&theater www.facebook.com/tortugas.nicas.7/photos/a.629521757242560.1073741853.348966155298123/629547360573333/?type=3&theater www.facebook.com/tortugas.nicas.7/photos/a.349924418535630.1073741828.348966155298123/686559718205430/?type=3&theater

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).

The agreed start date of the project was 1 June 2017.

Start-up

0.1 Project start-up: The project has been set up within FFI's institutional project management systems. FFI's project team held planning workshops and has developed the project workplan, detailing roles, responsibilities and budget allocations (for Darwin funds and co-finance). Initial meetings with key partners and stakeholders have taken place and further meetings scheduled. The scope and terms of Fundación LIDER's role within the project agreed and formalised through the development of a sub-agreement (due for signature at time of writing).

0.2 Finalise indicator measurement methods. Complete baselines. Plan research: The project team has been developing a detailed Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework tailored to this project, which includes Darwin Initiative Standard Measures, draws upon established methods and incorporates detailed indicators regarding capacity building, enterprise development and socio-economic measures. The M&E framework details indicator measurement methods and responsibilities, and aligns with the social research and baseline information, as per discussions to date with project partner Jose Urteaga.

0.3 Implement M&E: Project M&E will build upon baseline information collated under 0.2 and will be implemented from Q3 onwards, throughout the project.

Output 1: Tourism and development informed by economic valuation of turtles

1.1 Discuss intended valuation study with tourism partners: The project team have reached out to the Nicaraguan Tourism Chamber (CANATUR) and tourism specialists, and these initial conversations confirm significant buy-in to the valuation study. A series of conference calls have been scheduled for Q3 to obtain more detailed inputs from the Executive Director of CANATUR and Dr Carolin Lusby of FIU on existing and potential sources of information, and the uses and most appropriate format for the results generated by the study.

1.2 Define detailed methodology: FFI's project team have undertaken a literature review into comparable valuation studies, appropriate methods and available toolkits, to inform the detailed methods to be applied in Nicaragua. The findings and potential methods will be discussed and agreed with key tourism partners - including CANATUR, FIU and INTUR - in Q3.

NB. Activities **1.3 – 1.11** regarding the valuation study are scheduled for Y1 Q3 and beyond.

Output 2: Nicaragua's technical capacity relevant to turtles increased

2.1 Organise student projects/internships on relevant topics: The first cohort of projects to help students gain experience after graduating - on turtles, marine resources, ecotourism and coastal livelihoods – began in June at the hawksbill nesting sites at Estero Padre Ramos (EPR) and Estero Aserradores (ASE). Following a call for applicants, five graduates from three Nicaraguan universities were selected (three Biologists, one Vet and one Environmental Engineer; three female and two male). The students received training and experience in marine turtle conservation, monitoring of nesting females (collection of morphometric data, ID and satellite tagging) and nests (including hatchery management), scientific data collection and database management, and environmental education and outreach. Students were asked to identify their key skills, research preferences and future plans, so that the development of their specific interests and expertise could be incorporated into their internships. They therefore undertook research into species richness and monitoring of birds in EPR and ASE, an ethnobotanical study of medicinal plants in EPR and Environmental Impact Assessment studies to inform the development of tourism infrastructure compatible with hawksbill nesting in ASE.

2.2 Develop and deliver a module on community-based ecotourism: Discussions are underway with Dr Carolin Lusby (FIU) regarding the design of this module and its incorporation within existing courses at the Universidad Americana (UAM). The course will focus on coastal community-based ecotourism and include field trips to observe turtle tourism sites and low-impact coastal development. The detail of course content and timetable will be agreed in Q3.

2.3 Develop guidelines for turtle hatcheries and associated tourism operations: The project team have drawn together existing manuals and guidance (from Nicaragua and internationally) on hatchery management protocols, visitation to nesting beaches, and tourism development on nesting beaches. FFI is leading the process of integrating this information into a first draft of the guidelines, which will be shared with the Nicaraguan Ministry of Environment (MARENA), NTCN members, project partners and specialists (including Jose Urteaga) in Q3.

2.4 Provide training to hatchery operators on techniques and practices in the guidelines: FFI is collecting baseline data to characterize all turtle conservation and hatchery operations in the Pacific of Nicaragua (with survey data is being collated in Excel), to inform the process of dissemination and training once the guidelines are complete and to guide project M&E.

2.6 Support NTCN to become effective: Since project inception, two meetings of the NTCN have been held - on 3 July (15 participants; 10 female, 5 male) and 4 August (10 participants; 6 female, 4 male) - in order to reactivate the Network. Key next steps were agreed; to select a new Board of Directors for the NCTN, encourage the inclusion of new members (including students) involved in marine turtle conservation, and prepare an activities plan for 2018. FFI is inspiring increased communications within the NCTN (taking advantage of increased access to cell phones and internet amongst field practitioners) through the creation of a WhatsApp group called '*Grupo Tortuguero NICA*'. The ~30 active members of the group are sharing information on nesting and hatching, new scientific reports, discussion of issues occurring on nesting beaches, emergency/Tsunami warnings).

NB. Activities **2.5** and **2.7** are scheduled for Q4 and Y2.

Output 3: Coastal community members benefit from improved economic opportunities

3.1 Provide skills training and SME development support for enterprise, employment and service provision opportunities: Skills training for the group of Community Tourist Guides from EPR and patrol teams at EPR and ASE is being designed to develop and diversify their knowledge and environmental interpretation skills for use when hosting visitors to these sites. Training scheduled for Q3 will draw upon the studies undertaken through activity 2.1, on bird identification and the importance of these sites for medicinal plants.

3.2 Foster equitable relationships between businesses and local groups: FFI is working to facilitate dialogue and identify opportunities to strengthen cooperation between businesses and community groups. For example, a community tourism operative in Chacocente (a protected area hosting a mass nesting beach for olive ridleys and a leatherback nesting beach) has requested FFI's support in reaching a fair and lasting agreement with a private tourism operator for the provision of local services, such as meals, horse riding, boat transportation, so as to improve and stabilise income to the community (meeting scheduled in October 2017).

3.3 Develop voluntourism enterprise with EPR community: A new social and environmental enterprise, "SOS Nicaragua", was established in 2017 by an entrepreneur who has been involved in the voluntourism project at EPR since 2012. Through an agreement with FFI, SOS Nicaragua took over the running of the voluntourism enterprise at EPR in July 2017, in accordance with a fully-costed business plan developed (prior to this project) with technical support from FFI and the participation of local stakeholders. FFI and SOS Nicaragua are working together to define next steps, including priorities for strengthening community participation - as service providers and in the enterprise's development - and benefit sharing.

3.4 Assist community groups to improve or expand economic activities related to coastal tourism: Based upon FFI's existing links, several community groups/cooperatives and their training needs have been identified as priorities by the project team. In August, FFI and Fundación LIDER facilitated a workshop for the Chacocente Community Tourism Cooperative to evaluate and improve their governance mechanisms, receive training on their legal obligations, and identify and address key administrative and organisational issues to aid their future development as a profitable enterprise. 32 people from their Board of Directors and cooperative members participated (16 female, 16 male). Agreements were reached regarding roles and responsibilities in attending to tourists and the distribution of benefits.

3.5 Enable turtle beach patrollers to gain additional skills useful for improving off-season livelihoods: The project team are gathering information from patrol team members on their training needs and aspirations. Training described in Activity 3.1 will create additional skills amongst patrol team members for hosting tourists (including specialist birders) off-season.

3.6 Establish concessions for mangroves custodianship of and sustainable use of cockles: FFI is working with Fundación LIDER and local stakeholders to reach consensus on suitable sites for the establishment of mangrove concessions and the sustainable cultivation of mangrove cockles (*Anadara similis*). Eligible community groups have been invited to a meeting (scheduled in Q3) to define next steps, agree criteria and select beneficiaries. Fundación LIDER will lead this work, under their agreement with FFI.

NB. Activities 3.7, 3.8, 3.9 and 3.10 are scheduled for Q3, Q4 or thereafter.

Output 4: Protection status of one critical area of turtle habitat enhanced

4.1 Analyse options then organise negotiation and signing of a multi-party agreement with landowner, municipality and local leaders. FFI has carried out research into the legal options and requirements for securing the long-term protection for the property at Punta Venecia, EPR and further legal counsel is being sought (Terms of Reference for this work will be shared with three lawyers with relevant skills and experience in Q3). Through preliminary negotiations, FFI has discussed options with the 'landowner' for dedicating the property to conservation purposes and a course of action agreed; after the municipal elections (on 5 November 2017) a joint proposal - based upon the legal advice received - will be shared with the municipal authorities and MARENA officials, in order to gain their support.

NB. Activity 4.2 is scheduled for Q3 and thereafter.

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.

Unexpected events: At the beginning of October 2017, Tropical Storm Nate hit Nicaragua, causing flooding in many communities on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua. Local government offices have focused significant energies on addressing the consequences of the storm (loss of crops, damaged infrastructure, delays in school programs, loss of fishing gear and boats, etc.). We anticipate that there will be some knock on effects on the implementation of certain activities during Q3 and into Q4, such as those relating to the cultivation and processing of cockles and the establishment of the snapper rearing facility in EPR (activities 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8) being led by Fundación LIDER (expected delay 4 to 6 weeks). This delay also means that establishing the legal agreements for these concessions and facilities will now coincide with the municipal elections scheduled for November, which could lead to further delay.

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	N/A

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?

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. Additionally, if you were funded under R23 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate 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 send your **completed report by email** to Eilidh Young at 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: 22-035 Darwin Half Year Report**