



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

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	Alison Gunn
Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)	31 October 2019 HYR3
Project website/blog/social media etc.	The project does not have a dedicated webpage. However the FFI website hosts a page on our broader marine turtle conservation programme in Nicaragua .

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).

Project Management

At the start of Y3, FFI undertook a rapid and informal 'mid-term evaluation' of the project, to assess project progress against plans; findings were shared and discussed by the Project Steering Committee on 13 June 2019 and no revisions requested. The Project Steering Committee (Project Lead, three members of the in-country team, plus Jose Urteaga) continued to meet regularly during the period (3 meetings via Skype, 1 face-to-face meeting in Managua). The Committee reviewed and updated the Y3 workplan, agreed priority next steps, and discussed how best to improve project-level Monitoring & Evaluation.

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

Work began on the valuation study in Q1 of Y3, led by the qualified team of experts in environmental economics, value chains, and sustainable tourism from CANATUR and CDETur (the Research Department of CANATUR's Centre for Tourism Business Development). The study has drawn on historical data and existing information, and the expert team have conducted primary surveys and interviews with multiple stakeholder groups from the communities and enterprises with impacts along the Pacific coast. A first draft of the study's initial findings was shared with FFI at the end of September 2019 and is undergoing review by the project team.

The valuation study, combined with surveys being led by students from the National Autonomous University (UNAN Managua), are providing insights into existing and future turtle and marine tourism opportunities on the Pacific coast.

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

Two undergraduate thesis projects and two Master's thesis projects, which began in Y2, were completed in May 2019 and August 2019 respectively. The students' research focused on monitoring biodiversity and water quality in the Padre Ramos Estuary, with emphasis on the locations and ecological impacts of the snapper rearing facilities supported by the project. We continue working through FFI's tripartite agreement with Fundacion LIDER and the University UNAN-Leon, and are developing a new collaboration with UNAN Managua to build capacity through their course on Sustainable Tourism, with priority research topics proposed for the coming academic year.

The project facilitated the launch event for the Nicaragua Azul museum on 8 June 2019 at the Universal School Pierre & Marie Curie, to coincide with World Oceans Day. Nicaragua Azul is a unique resource for a wide cross-section of stakeholders to better understand the beauty and richness of Nicaragua's marine biodiversity. 86 people attended the event, including students, members of CANATUR, decision makers and other stakeholders. A press conference was held and the resulting press coverage reached five national [TV channels](#), four online/print [newspapers](#), and was disseminated on [social media](#) (follow links for examples). The museum opened to the public on 11 June, since when it has received over 500 visitors from schools, national universities, decision makers, NGOs, CANATUR, tourism businesses, scouts, coastal community members, donor agencies, American universities, amongst others (see www.nicaraguazul.com and www.facebook.com/nicaraguazul/). The museum is proving a valuable national asset in increasing knowledge amongst professionals and stakeholders in tourism, coastal development, municipal planning and natural and social sciences of the value of and current threats to Nicaragua's oceans and biodiversity.

FFI and FIU have resumed work on the training module on sustainable tourism, eco-tourism and coastal community-based tourism. During this period, FIU's Dr Carolin Lusby has led work to fully revise and re-formulate the training materials drafted in Y1 into a complete English language resource workbook compiling relevant theory, case studies, and links to further reading and external resources. Workbook chapters cover: 1) Concepts and tools of sustainable, community-based ecotourism operation and management; 2) What is ecotourism, what makes it different, and what new potential markets it opens up; 3) Marketing and distribution channels, links, and products specific to community-based ecotourism; 4) Importance of Nicaragua's natural coastal-marine resources, including marine turtles, and their value for the growing ecotourism sector; 5) Carrying capacity, limits of acceptable change and management tools specific to community-based ecotourism; 6) Tools and resources for building the capacity of community-based ecotourism entrepreneurs and service providers. The workbook will then be translated into Spanish and formatted into a series of target audience-appropriate training materials for a variety of stakeholders in Nicaragua (existing tourism industry actors, tourism guides, community entrepreneurs, conservationists, tourism students, Nicaragua's Tourism Institute).

FFI, in collaboration with Jose Urteaga, has progressed in drafting best practice guidelines on two topics; i) national guidelines for the management of turtle hatcheries, and ii) national guidelines for tourist visitation to turtle nesting beaches. A consultation workshop is scheduled for December 2019 at which the guidelines will be presented and discussed with stakeholders, including members of NTCN and CANATUR.

Output 3: Coastal community members benefit from improved economic opportunities

During this period, FFI has been exploring a new collaboration with UNAN Managua through their course on Sustainable Tourism, in relation to strengthening community-based service provision opportunities linked to coastal tourism.

Through our partnership with Fundación LIDER, the project has continued to support six cooperatives in Estero Padre Ramos. Their focus on empowering female leadership within the cooperatives is generating results, with strong participation of women in decision making processes. Together with LIDER, we are working to address identified challenges linked to the production cycle for snapper, specifically with regards to procurement of fingerlings, production of high-protein fish-food, water quality monitoring, and marketing.

The project using a Participatory Market Systems Development (PMSD) approach to improve fisheries-related livelihoods strategies, strengthening the incentives for coastal communities to

manage their fisheries sustainably and commit to wider marine conservation. In July, the project's PMSD specialist facilitated a participatory market mapping and action planning workshop, focussed on the market for snapper in Chinandega. The workshop brought together market actors (input suppliers and traders), members of the EPR fisher cooperatives, relevant state decision makers (from INPESCA and MEFCCA), and specialists from Fundacion LIDER, UNAN Leon and FFI. The participants mapped out the current and ideal market system for snapper, clarified roles of each actor, and identified targeted interventions to generate desired systemic changes. Representatives from the fisher cooperatives have since come together to further develop their business plans, using the Business Model Canvas framework, evaluate their training needs and define training plans.

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

Following the reopening of negotiations with the landowner at Punta Venecia in March 2019, the project team convened a meeting between the municipal authorities of El Viejo, FFI, the landowner and our lawyers in April 2019. At this meeting it was agreed that the option of legally passing the land concession to FFI is not appropriate in the current political context. Therefore the best legal framework is a bilateral usufruct contract between the landowner and FFI, which legally gives FFI the right to use and decide how to use the land for a period of 59 years. The usufruct contract has been drafted by our Nicaraguan lawyers, with use of the land restricted to conservation and research, and reviewed by FFI's legal team in the UK. The draft contract was sent to landowner in mid-September and a meeting proposed for final review and signature.

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.

There are ongoing challenges linked to shifts in government attitudes towards NGOs operating in Nicaragua.

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: Yes

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?

Thanks for your continued support!

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 R25 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 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: 25-035 Darwin Half Year Report**