



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

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 2020 HYR4
Project website/blog/social media etc.	https://www.fauna-flora.org/projects/conserving-marine-turtles-eastern-pacific-nicaragua

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).

Project Management

Members of the project's Steering Committee (Project Lead, three members of the in-country team, plus Jose Urteaga) met regularly throughout the period to plan and coordinate activities, including three full/quorate meetings of the Committee via Skype. The project logframe and all activities have been reviewed in light of the changing national context and likely impact of Covid-19 (on coastal livelihoods and the tourism industry in particular) for the remainder of the project period. During this period the project team have had an increased focus on collating and sharing lessons learnt, strengthening engagement with government decision makers, as well as developing plans for measuring project impact - this includes through end-of-project monitoring of socio-economic and perceptions indicators amongst both beneficiary and non-beneficiary households, using methods consistent with those applied at project baseline.

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

A priority this period has been to finalise plans for the communication and dissemination of key information from the turtle valuation study completed in Y3, with the aim of promoting integration of conservation values into government-led initiatives and future private-sector recovery. In accordance with this, the drafting of an illustrated abridged version is underway.

The Covid-19 pandemic has compounded the already fragile state of the tourism sector in Nicaragua. Accordingly, the two activities (1.5 & 1.6) under this Output to collaborate with tourism sector stakeholders and FIU to identify and promote community-based marine/turtle tourism initiatives - which have been on hold since Y2 - are no longer possible within the project period.

Meanwhile, in line with FFI's aim to strengthen project evaluation and learning, the project team have begun working with specialists from FFI's Science & Design team to draw out lessons learnt from the project, with a focus on themes around technical capacity building and strengthening sustainable livelihoods opportunities.

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

Collaboration with academic institutions to support student placements and research projects continued this period. One student from the National Agrarian University (UNA) who undertook his final year thesis in Y3 - a Rapid Ecological Assessment of two key sites for hawksbills within Estero Padre Ramos - successfully defended his thesis with distinction (97%) in September. This student has been invited to share his experience of volunteering and conducting his thesis with FFI, through this project, with other students taking undergraduate classes in the Faculty of Natural Resources & Environment. Three further final-year Biology students from the National Autonomous University of León (UNAN-León) have been undertaking a study placement with FFI this period (one of whom began their placement in Y3), researching the impact of temperature on hawksbill nesting success in Aserradores.

The publication (i.e. final typesetting and graphic design) of the best practice "*Manual for the Construction, Operation and Evaluation of Marine Turtle Hatcheries in Nicaragua*" - as finalised via a participatory process in Y3 - is near completion. The final wording of the draft manual was shared with the Ministry of Environment & Natural Resources (MARENA) in May and a joint workshop planned in June to present and invite feedback on each section of the document. Whilst MARENA postponed this meeting, the process aligns with their plans for 2020 and we are continuing towards final publication and dissemination amongst stakeholders.

Meanwhile, FFI has continued to facilitate national level communication and collaboration amongst stakeholders involved in turtle conservation through social media and other platforms.

Output 3: Coastal community members benefit from improved economic opportunities

FFI continues to provide technical skills training and SME development support to target groups of beneficiaries through this project. We are prioritising interventions with potential to generate self-sufficiency post-project. During this period, notable advances include:

- Project support to the group of turtle beach patrollers at Salamina (in the Municipality of Villa El Carmen), alongside coordination with the Ministry for Family, Community, Cooperative and Associative Economy (MEFCCA), has enabled this group to advance in their plans to establish themselves as a community cooperative dedicated to the conservation of marine turtles and touristic services at this site. This initiative will both improve the value and security of being a turtle patrol professional and strengthen the long-term sustainability of turtle conservation at this site.
- Project support to the Chacocente Tourism/Honey Cooperative has enabled them to implement priority actions from their agreed plan for improving honey production and market linkages, including the installation of 16 new hives.
- Women from the Weaving for Nature groups have benefitted from training in communications tools and are now better able to connect (via email, mobile phone, social media and video calls) with other groups, clients and market actors.
- Through our partnership with Fundación LIDER, the project has continued to support nine fisher cooperatives in Estero Padre Ramos, with a focus on interventions which complete the production cycle for snapper – i.e. through supporting one cooperative to lead the production of high-protein fish food pellets (using waste from nearby shrimp farms and renewable energy) and the production of fingerlings. Through our collaboration with LIDER we continue to reinforce the links between project support to these mariculture initiatives and beneficiaries' commitments to sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation

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

The legal agreement between FFI and the landowner at Punta Venecia has been reviewed and approved by both parties and is due for signature in Q3.

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.

The main unexpected developments this period relate to Covid-19 having compounded the challenges already faced by the project, in particular the collapse in tourism since 2018.

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.

The Covid-19 pandemic has catalysed the total collapse of Nicaragua's already weakened tourism sector and has compounded existing socio-economic vulnerabilities amongst rural communities across the country. Accordingly the pandemic has undermined key Outcome level assumptions of this project, i.e. that *there will be no major disruption to livelihoods in the project localities - through natural disasters, large-scale pollution, or national economic/social instability*; and that *Nicaragua's tourism industry will not be affected by extreme natural disaster or widespread economic/social instability*.

Within this context and associated increased dependencies on natural resource extraction across Nicaragua, project strategies to support sustainable livelihoods amongst coastal communities and increase resilience are highly relevant and necessary. However, certain activities linked to collaboration with the tourism sector and the promotion of community-based tourism initiatives, some of which have been on hold since the outbreak of socio-political instability at the start of Y2, are no longer feasible within the project period.

The Steering Committee and wider project team have reviewed the project logframe, activities and budget in the light of the implications of Covid-19. Whilst activities 1.5, 1.6, 2.2, 2.5 and 3.3 are affected, project targets under Outcome 1 are likely to be most affected, in addition to one Outcome level indicator. However, at Outcome level, we also anticipate that it will be difficult to disentangle project impact on coastal community members' wellbeing and perceptions from the impact of project externalities on the defined economic and perceptions indicators.

Recognising that the project is in its final year, we have not submitted a revised logframe to the Darwin Secretariat, but would welcome a discussion with LTS as to whether a Change Request detailing the impact on the logframe, as outlined above, is appropriate at this stage.

No overall underspend is anticipated. A Change Request is in preparation regarding the reallocation of remaining budget allocated to international travel (Activity 2.5) and tourism workshops / training (Activities 1.5, 1.6 & 2.2) towards final activities under Output 3 related to sustainable livelihoods.

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:	No
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Formal change request submitted:	No
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Received confirmation of change acceptance	No
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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. Many thanks for your 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.

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**