

## Biodiversity Challenge Funds Projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus Half Year Report

*Note: If there is any confidential information within the report that you do not wish to be shared on our website, please ensure you clearly highlight this.*

**Submission Deadline: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023**

<b>Project reference</b>	30-027
<b>Project title</b>	Improving fisher livelihoods and protecting marine biodiversity in Timor-Leste
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Timor-Leste
<b>Lead partner</b>	Blue Ventures Conservation
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Government of Timor-Leste, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries WorldFish Dreamers Dive Academy (DDA) Assosiasaun Mariniero Timor Leste (AMTL)
<b>Project leader</b>	<i>Osaías Soares</i>
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	31 October 2023 <i>HYR1</i>
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="http://www.blueventures.org">www.blueventures.org</a>

**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).**

**Output 1. Savings and loans groups established and livelihood projects piloted with fishing dependent households, are improving the economic resilience of coastal community households and contributing to support for conservation goals.**

To begin establishing savings and loans groups and piloting livelihoods, an initial questionnaire was developed and presented through focus group discussions (FGDs) in the aldeias (villages) of Biqueli Pala (Atauro island) and Ilimano (on the mainland). The aim of the questionnaire was to gather the communities' ideas for possible livelihood activities, provide guidance on how loans can be used and identify priority areas for Blue Ventures' (BV's) livelihood support.

Additional stakeholder consultations were conducted in early May with participation from 47 community members (27 female, 20 male) from three bairros (sub-communities within the aldeia) in Ilimano (Behedan, Lian-Lidu, Marmer). Results from the consultations showed that community income depends heavily on their fishing activity. Some community members reported that they sell firewood, even though this is illegal.

In Ilimano, 25 participants (100% female) received initial training in late May on structure, roles and responsibilities, and rules around loan amounts, repayments and interest. Ten of the participants have become members of the group, which has been named BEMOS. The amount of money in circulation in this group is \$305. Seven members accessed the group's loan scheme with the principal of saving roughly \$2.50 every month, with an interest rate of 5%. Members

have used the loans for their own small businesses, such as running small kiosks, or selling petrol, grilled fish or rice. Loans started with an initial amount between \$50 and \$200. A savings and loans group has also been established in the community of Biqueli Pala (through co-funding), with a total of 38 members (35 female, 3 male) accessing loans between \$100 and \$250.

The BV livelihood and saving and loans process has been further refined, including developing a livelihoods social survey and designing a two-day workshop with the Village Saving and Loan Association which will be delivered in the second half of year one: content of the workshop will include identification of livelihoods, implementation of those activities and the training and skills required, and identification of potential members to whom technical training can be delivered during the project lifetime. Furthermore, internal capacity building was provided to the BV Timor-Leste Fisheries and Livelihoods Senior Manager, alongside staff and partners from Indonesia, by BV's Global Technical Advisor for Financial Inclusion; these staff worked together on the development of a financial inclusion toolkit, which combines learnings and processes from across our global programmes into a manual that, once finalised, will be used within the organisation and shared with partners.

**Output 2. Local marine management plans in place, governed by effective LMMA committees and implementing sustainable marine management measures which reduce threats to biodiversity.**

A desk-based assessment of nine potential locations/partner communities was carried out to identify communities to approach regarding working together to develop an LMMA, ranking them based on four criteria including ecological alignment, existing relationships with the community and alignment with other existing/planned work in the same area by government, other NGOs and businesses.

Based on these criteria, three initial aldeias were identified to work with to establish local marine management measures using local *Tara Bandu*: Ilik-Namu (in Biqueli, Atauro island); Biqueli-Pala (in Biqueli, Atauro island); and Ilimano (in Uma Caduac, Manatuto municipality).

*Aldeia Ilimano*

Initial consultation meetings with local authorities and community members, and information sessions with communities about the benefits of developing an LMMA have been carried out. Ilimano, during a meeting with 26 fisher and gleaner representatives, including the chief, voted unanimously to work with BV to develop a *Tara Bandu* to trial a rotational octopus closure. This will be the first known octopus closure in Timor-Leste. We have begun to hold meetings with six bairros in Ilimano to identify the closure area.

*Aldeia Ilik-Namu*

Initial outreach was made to the aldeia chief and several fisher representatives in August, and a wider community meeting on 13th September with more than 70 fishers, gleaners and local leaders. BV presented an overview of local marine management and *Tara Bandu*, reasons why other communities have chosen to use *Tara Bandu*, and shared an overview of BV's community consultation and community-based fisheries monitoring (CFM) process. The meeting was also an opportunity to share a presentation on the importance of seagrass as a key habitat for healthy fisheries and a near-shore habitat in Ilik-Namu. Community members self-organised an additional meeting to vote, with 70 community members voting unanimously to work with BV in a community consultation process to establish a fisheries *Tara Bandu*. Consultation will continue in November following local council elections.

*Aldeia Biqueli-Pala*

As this is a neighbouring community to Ilik-Namu, initial outreach followed the same process as above. A meeting with the aldeia chief and fisher representatives was organised but the Vice Prime Minister for Timor-Leste made a last minute visit to Atauro on the same morning, so local leaders and community members had to prioritise this visit. Nonetheless, three visiting BV team members were able to meet briefly with the aldeia chief and 10 fisher representatives, and share hard-copy information about BV's *Tara Bandu* community consultation process. The aldeia chief

and fisher representatives were all in favour of working together. However, it was agreed that a meeting with additional fishers and gleaners was needed to make a collective decision about whether or not the whole community wants to move ahead on a *Tara Bandu* consultation. This meeting will be conducted after the local council elections. In the meantime, a head fisher representative is sharing the initial information from BV with fishers.

**Output 3. Communities are engaged in collecting ecological and fisheries data, which is being regularly analysed and fed back to communities to inform marine-management decisions.**

Collecting ecological and fisheries data is integrated as part of the *Tara Bandu* community consultation process. As outlined above, meetings have been held to identify the first three communities in preparation for starting consultations in October and the establishment of CFM groups in 2024. Accordingly, a volunteer contract has been developed which will be used for recruiting community members (including women participants) to form CFM groups across the project locations (activity 3.4). Work has also been led by the M&E Coordinator, the Programme Manager - LMMAs and other team members to assess the existing CFM data collection protocols and adapt the methodology specifically to community needs (activity 3.1). This includes developing a data collection methodology to support fin-fish management, which is expected to be a focus of several of the project communities.

The new methodology and Kobo Toolbox (a mobile monitoring tool) forms were contextualised and translated into Tetun, with local language fish names added for Ilimano, and local language fish names to be added for Atauro (Ilik-Namu and Biqueli-Pala) in 2024. In preparation for providing training to CFM groups on the protocol and use of Kobo in early 2024 (activity 3.5), BV staff were trained on the new protocol from the 25th to 28th of September, which included a day of office-based training and three days' field training in an existing partner community.

Additionally, as part of BV's global strategy, we have been working with external consultants to build a data analysis pipeline to streamline data from Kobo through to a user-friendly dashboard with real-time analysed data. Ahead of introducing this automated data system to Timor-Leste communities, the M&E Coordinator and LMMA team received initial training on how the dashboard and the linked, semi-automated data validation system will work. The system will be trialled with the first project community in early 2024 (activity 3.3).

**2. 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.**

Early on in the project, the Conservation Science Senior Manager, transitioned into a new role. This unfortunately coincided with a change in Country Director and the delay in approving the logframe amendment submitted in May (approval still outstanding). Thus, the start of some activities were put on hold until the beginning of August, when a new Programme Manager - LMMAs was appointed, followed by the new Country Director starting in September. The former was an internal appointment which allowed for a rapid induction. The project implementation timetable has been updated to account for the four-month delay, and ensure that all project activities will be successfully delivered within the project timeframe. However, while we are increasing staff resourcing on the project in the remainder of year one, within the first project year not all funds will be spent, but will still be needed.

The project anticipates submitting a budget change request to carry forward approximately GBP 34,000 predominantly of Staff, Travel & Subsistence and Operating Costs to year two.

**3. Have any of these issues been discussed with NIRAS and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?**

Discussed with NIRAS:	No (change request being drafted, though the delay in the logframe amendment approval has been discussed by email)
Formal Change Request submitted:	No (being drafted)
Received confirmation of change acceptance	No
Change request reference if known:	

**4a. Please confirm your actual spend in this financial year to date (i.e. from 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023)**

**Actual spend:** ██████████

**4b. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g. more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this financial year (ending 31 March 2024)?**

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: ██████████

**4c. 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 re-budget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a re-budget 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.**

**NB: if you expect an underspend, do not claim anything more than you expect to spend this financial year.**

**5. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to BCF management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

N/A

**If you are a new project and you received feedback comments that requested a response, or if your Annual Report Review asked you to provide a response with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.**

**All new projects (excluding Darwin Plus Fellowships and IWT Challenge Fund Evidence projects) should submit their Risk Register with this report if they have not already done so.**

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

Please send your **completed report by email** to [BCF-Reports@niras.com](mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com). The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Half Year Report**