



Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31 October 2016)

Project Ref No	23-028
Project Title Connecting	Coastal Communities for integrated seascape management in Atlántida Honduras.
Country(ies)/Territory(ies)	Honduras.
Lead Organisation	Fauna & Flora International
Partner(s)	LARECOTURH, Centre for Marine Studies (CEM), Cayos Cochinos Foundation (FCC), Bay Islands Foundation (FIB) and Cuero-y-Salado Foundation (FUCSA)
Project Leader	Robert Bensted-Smith
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	HYR1 31 October 2016
Project website/ Twitter/ Blog/ Instagram etc	
Funder (DFID/Defra)	DFID

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 project start-up activities have been completed as planned, including signing agreements with each of the five partner NGOs in Honduras, an initial week-long session to flesh out the project plans, discuss key issues and challenges, and specify methods for measuring each indicator. There were two planning sessions with the national GEF coastal and marine project, aimed at agreeing cooperation and co-financing of specific activities. While these confirmed the alignment of interests and intention to cooperate, the GEF project leader proved reluctant to confirm specific funding commitments, perhaps because of their decision-making process. The project team also held a workshop to present the project to local authorities and partners have held a number of meetings in participating communities. Baseline measurements have been determined for most indicators, but a few remain to be completed in Q3.

Output 3 - the evidence base for coordinated seascape management - is the focus of much of the scheduled Year 1 activity and has been led by CEM. Following discussions amongst all partners, CEM developed a simple database for each partner to input metadata about relevant publications, reports and other sources of information, for the initial overview of available information. This task is in progress but needs to accelerate in Q3 to stay on schedule. Meanwhile, several other data gathering activities are in process. CEM has been reviewing existing genetic studies of connectivity relevant to the seascape and identifying gaps, while FIB has been assessing threats to mangroves. Data on fishers is being compiled and there have been some meetings with fishers, particularly at Utila, to obtain information on ecologically important sites, but systematic gathering of community inputs to the evidence base will be done after the review of existing studies. CEM in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institute, other researchers and the project's co-management partners (FUCSA, FCC and FIB), has started fieldwork to locate and geo-reference known features of the seascape, notably sea-grass beds, reefs, sandbanks and fishing banks. In Cuero-y-Salado fisheries catch monitoring using the OurFish app has been initiated at two local collection centres. This initial step of compiling relevant seascape information and sharing it between partners is valuable, but has encountered some challenges in terms of cooperation and coordination of working methods

between partners, which we need to clarify in the second semester.

Output 1 - coordinated planning and management action across the seascape - is largely scheduled to start up in the third and fourth quarters. Nevertheless, FUCSA and FIB have started work on mangroves, with FUCSA participating in a workshop on the national "CARICOMP" monitoring methodology, which it will pilot in Cuero-y-Salado, and organising an exchange visit for people from the Bay Islands National Park to learn about mangrove restoration. On flagship species, the main area of activity has been hawksbill turtle protection, for which FCC has involved 17 student volunteers and 10 local young trainee guides, alongside Foundation rangers and Naval personnel, in 20 nights and 10 days of beach patrols. Nineteen nests were found and protected, but evidence was found of 5-10 nests from which the eggs had been poached and at least one adult turtle killed.

Under Output 2 - compliance with regulations - activities have started somewhat ahead of schedule with project partners sharing information about current training provided to Navy personnel related to their respective protected areas, communication with Wildlife Conservation Society about the applicability of the "SMART" app for monitoring and patrols, and investigation (at the request of the marine authorities) of technological options for vessel tracking.

Work on Output 5 - community capacities and empowerment - is advancing broadly on schedule, but somewhat unevenly. It began with an FFI webinar for partners on the livelihoods framework and the concept of vulnerability, as a basis for future identification of priority groups for support. The registration of fishers has continued at Cuero-y-Salado with 191 fishers licensed, of whom 54 are members of the APROCUS cooperative. FUCSA, CEM and LARECOTURH have each contributed to strengthening APROCUS and other Cuero-y-Salado stakeholder groups through support to their annual operational plan for 2016-17, a workshop on governance, and, in the case of LARECOTURH, assisting APROCUS to request and obtain an external donation of four fishing boats, gear and freezer, with a view to enabling them to fish further offshore and improve the quality of the product. In the governance workshop APROCUS, along with two other fisher organizations, formally presented to the authorities a request for increased presence in the area, increased involvement of other technical and scientific organisations and recognition of the contribution by communities to marine resource management. FIB and CEM have similarly worked on fisher registration and plans for strengthening the marine governance system at Utila.

Lastly, activities under Output 4 - seascape stakeholder forum and network - are mostly scheduled for the second semester but there has already been a good deal of discussion among partners about the optimal set-up for the forum, bearing in mind factors such as the geographic scope, relation to existing bodies, focus on marine resource management, transaction costs and so on. LARECOTURH is taking this forward and is currently organising the initial workshop of leaders from each of the seventeen communities, while in parallel holding consultations in certain communities to sound out their interests and concerns. In doing so they have encountered some scepticism on the grounds of prior experience with projects that create expectations but do not follow through, which obviously this project aims to avoid.

Overall, the project has got off to a dynamic start, with a good launch workshop and many activities under way, most but not all in accordance with the stated project schedule. There is room to strengthen coordination and collaboration in some aspects.

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.

The biggest unforeseen problem is the decline in the value of sterling. Of our year 1 budget, 90% is to be spent in US Dollars (£98,000 of £109,000). When we submitted the proposal in November 2015 the pound was worth USD 1.54, today it is worth USD 1.22, which implies a 20% shortfall in funds for implementation. If not resolved by increased budget allocation or additional successful fund-raising, it will significantly affect project implementation in the remainder of the three years.

The administrative changes on the DFID side affected cash flow and so delayed the start of some partner activities but this has been managed without serious impact on project progress. The departure of the intended CEM Marine Monitoring and Technical Coordinator shortly before the project was followed by timely, satisfactory replacement by an alternative candidate. Three months into the project the FFI Marine and Fisheries Specialist left FFI in order to move to the USA with his partner. Rather than immediately finding a like-for-like replacement, we have taken a little time to reassess the priority technical needs of the project. We will be writing to LTS International about this in November.

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: Budget shortfall due to decline in sterling - **Yes**

Change in CEM personnel - **Yes**

Change in FFI marine and fisheries specialist - **Not yet**; intend to do so soon, following partner consultations about priority technical needs.

Formal change request submitted: For CEM personnel change - **Yes**

Regarding budget shortfall, FFI raised the issue with LTS International for all FFI projects.

Received confirmation of change acceptance : For CEM personnel change - **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.

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

None

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 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**