



Darwin Initiative Main/Post/D+ Project Half Year Report (due 31st October 2018)

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, FFI
Report date and number (e.g., HYR3)	31 Oct 2018 – HYR2
Project website/blog/social media etc.	https://www.fauna-flora.org/countries/nicaragua NTCN Facebook page - tortugas.nicas.7

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).

Over the last 6 months, a number of project activities have been delayed or cancelled as a result of the civil unrest and resulting security situation in the country (see section 2a).

Project Management

The Project Steering Committee (Project Lead, plus three members of the in-country team) met regularly to update and revise the Y2 workplan, refine and approve the finalised project Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) framework, and review project progress during the period (6 meetings via Skype).

As proposed in our Y1 annual report, the Project Team conducted a full review of the project's logical framework in May-June; a workshop was held over 2 days in June to review the project logic and refine the indicators, drawing upon FFI expertise in project design, monitoring and evaluation. These revisions aimed to clarify the means by which project progress is measured and were shared with the Darwin Secretariat. The Project Team are now working to combine these with necessary revisions to the project logframe in response to changes to the context in which the project is operating (as per section 2a). This was discussed with the Darwin Secretariat in October 2018 and a Change Request is in preparation.

In line with the M&E framework, surveys to collect baseline household-level socio-economic data (260 households, with 800 inhabitants, 47% female, across 21 Pacific coastal communities) and baseline attitudes and perceptions towards marine turtle conservation and use (460 people, 50% women, across 21 communities) were completed (survey team of 6 researchers trained). The survey and sampling methods employed were designed to measure change and therefore project impact, through repeat surveying of individuals - both of project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (project beneficiaries: 218 individuals, 127 male and 91 female, across 18 communities, including those identified as potential/expected beneficiaries of

the project). Results have been compiled into a socio-economic baseline report. At project baseline, the households of project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were found to have similar socio-economic characteristics, although significant differences were found between communities in different areas of the coast. Poverty indicators, such as household food shortages are highly prevalent in some areas (up to 44% of households), with sharp deteriorations in household economic situations reported in 2018, compared to 2017.

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

After consistent annual growth in tourism and eco-tourism in recent decades, the tourism industry in Nicaragua has come to a virtual standstill since April 2018. Many hotels, restaurants and tour operators have closed, and staff made redundant. Work on the economic valuation study and related work in collaboration with tourism partners was therefore put on hold. The project team are now reviewing options for taking forward or redesigning this aspect of the project.

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

FFI is collaborating with the National Autonomous University of León (UNAN-León) and Fundacion LIDER in the supervision of four undergraduate theses and two Masters theses focussed upon the monitoring of water quality in 8 sites across the Estero Padre Ramos Natural Reserve (EPR) over the next 12 months. This collaboration was formalised through an agreement signed in August 2018.

The field visit to EPR for the first cohort of students undertaking the module on community-based ecotourism scheduled for May 2018 was cancelled, due to security concerns. FFI and FIU are evaluating options for future iterations of this training.

The consultation process around the best practice guidelines for tourism operations engaged in the management of hatcheries and observing turtles, has not gone ahead as planned, as key stakeholders were not disposed to meet due to the unrest. Broad recognition of the guidelines is needed for them to be adopted by tourism operations along the Pacific coast and the consultation process is now re-scheduled to start in January. The evaluation of hatchery incubation techniques, which is comparing hatching success between sack incubation and standard incubation methods, is collecting a second season of data. The results of this study are important in ensuring that the guidelines are locally appropriate and applicable, and include sack incubation (currently employed by a number of stakeholders) only once this method is proven to be successful.

Output 3: Coastal community members benefit from improved economic opportunities

During this period, skills training and SME development support for target beneficiary groups linked to coastal tourism encompassed participatory capacity building workshops for three groups of women weavers, collaboration with the volunteer-tourism enterprise at EPR and associated service providers. In the light of the recent collapse in tourism visitation across Nicaragua, we are working with these stakeholders to evaluate future market potential and opportunities, and to identify and focus on actions to facilitate readiness for when coastal tourism recovers.

Through our partnership with Fundacion LIDER, work has continued to build the capacity of four artisanal fishery cooperatives in and around EPR, with further training delivered in snapper fisheries management and fish-food production. Two snapper rearing cages, with capacity to rear 5,000 fish, were constructed with each cooperative (eight in total) and put into operation for the 2018 season (May-February). However, as a result of the intense rains experienced in September/October 2018, the juvenile snapper from four cages in sites most vulnerable to water turbidity and desalination died. LIDER is now working with the two affected cooperatives to relocate the facilities for the 2019 season.

LIDER is collaborating on a study with UNAN-León to compare population densities of mangrove cockles in cultivated and non-cultivated sites and to evaluate sustainable harvesting levels; results will inform work to develop appropriate market linkages, either nationally or more widely into El Salvador and elsewhere in Central America.

Certification documents for the two new cooperatives (COOPADI and COOPAM) were granted by the relevant government Ministry (MEFCCA). The cooperatives' Boards held Extraordinary

Meetings to approve the granting powers to their Board of Directors and opening of financial accounts, as necessary to comply with the law. Accordingly, formal concession requests have now been submitted to the relevant authorities (MARENA and INPESCA) for all four cooperatives.

Next steps in terms of training and facilitating Participatory Market Systems Development (PMSD) processes scheduled for June were postponed. In September 2018, the PMSD Specialist provided refresher training for the FFI team and facilitated a market systems selection process across both nature-based tourism and sustainable fisheries sectors, with next steps scheduled for November and January.

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

In April 2018, the three alternative legal options for securing the long-term protection of the property at Punta Venecia proposals were shared with the landowner and reviewed internally by FFI’s senior management and legal counsel in the UK. The proposed meeting between FFI, the landowner and the lawyer to discuss these options and agree next steps, coincided with the start of the civil unrest and has been on hold since that time. The lawyer is on a written retainer agreement, such that she will finalise the necessary contracts once agreement is reached with the other parties. The recruitment of FFI’s new Nicaragua Country Director in September 2018 provides us with an opportunity to renew contact and reinitiate negotiations.

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.

Civil unrest: There has been a prolonged period of political unrest and street violence in many areas of Nicaragua since mid-April 2018. As a result, project activities and field visits already planned for April and May were postponed or cancelled, and the planning of further activities put on hold. In line with FCO travel advice, all non-essential travel by foreign FFI staff and partners has been cancelled since April. Whilst the situation has had a significant impact on project implementation over the last 6-month period, FFI’s long term presence and local partnerships in Nicaragua mean that we positioned well to adapt and deliver project outcomes. FFI will be submitting a Change Request to reflect the impact of changes to the context in which the project is operating (for example, with respect to the country’s tourism industry) on project logframe, budget and timetable.

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 (in preparation)
Received confirmation of change acceptance	No

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.

Year 2 (2018/19) was budgeted to be the most costly of the four years of this project; however, due to the delays in project implementation during the first half of the year, the project is behind

on expenditure. The Change Request being prepared by the project team aims to restructure project activities and outputs in order to deliver the overall project Outcome and have minimum need for budget revision / underspend this year. We will be submitting this Change Request in December.

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 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 R24 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**