

## 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 2022**

<b>Project reference</b>	DIR28S2\1070 29-010
<b>Project title</b>	“Community conservation of critically endangered Hawksbill turtles in Nicaragua”.
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Nicaragua; Pearl Lagoon RACCS
<b>Lead partner</b>	WCS
<b>Partner(s)</b>	5 fishing communities of the Pearl Lagoon basin
<b>Project leader</b>	Karen Joseph ( [REDACTED] )
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)</b>	31 October 2022 HYR1
<b>Project website/blog/social media</b>	<a href="http://www.wcs.org">www.wcs.org</a>

**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).**

**Outcome 1: Conserve hawksbill turtle historical nesting grounds and increase population size through community conservation and increasing education in the Pearl Cays Wildlife Refuge (PCWR):** Our project staff is conducting monitoring surveys of hawksbill sea turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) in the Pearl Cays Wildlife Refuge (PCWR), Nicaragua Caribbean Coast, as planned. This report shows the advance on activities execution and advance towards outputs from April to September 2022, according to our logical framework:

**1.1 Nine nesting beaches protected within the PCWR :**

The team has completed 912 cays surveys, on average of 6 to 7 cays visited per day. All 9 nesting beaches have been systematically patrolled.

**1.2. At least 92% of nests protected by community patrollers in the PCWR:** In these 6 months, 735 new turtle clutches were protected and recorded, and we have achieved a 95.3 % of protection, with 4 % poached and 0.7 % nests lost due to natural causes. 26,485 eggs were counted and so far, 17,231 eggs successfully hatched with resulted in a 65.059% of hatchling released to the ocean. (Percentage based on 208 nests excavated).

**1.3. Hawksbill turtles nesting population on the Pearl Cays shows stability and an increase of at least 10% of new nesting females and 10% in returning females in comparison to previous years.** Due to shortages on project personnel, tagging has not been performed during this time of the year. We expect to resume tagging once a technical assistant is brought on board as new WCS staff in November.

**1.4 Average emerging success per nest is maintained during the life of the project :** the average emerging success in former years have been of 66% currently we have 65% average emerging success but still the nesting season goes until December, so we believe we will match emerging average from past years.

**1.5. 1,500 pupils (50% male, 50% female) in primary and secondary schools in 8 communities and 200 university students (50% male, 50% female) and local government officers impacted through educational activities :** So far a total of a total of 112 pupils from secondary school has received workshops about WCS and its conservation program in the Pearl Cays Wildlife Refuge. A total of 13 Marine Biology Students from the University of BICU have been trained and out on field techniques on turtle monitoring and conservation activity.

**Outcome 2: Benefit local communities around the Pearl Cays Wildlife Refuge with direct employment and sustainable livelihood alternatives in exchange for hawksbill protection commitments.**

**Output 2.1 At least 200 families (60% female and 40% male headed households from 4 communities with influence in the Pearl Cays refuge, benefited by improved seeds of staple crops :** these activities will begin in mid November with the hiring of an agricultural specialist. We haven't advanced yet on this work.

**Output 2.2 Improved livelihoods for 10 people directly and 50 people indirectly through hiring as community patrollers** We have so far hired 10 people through the project, so we have achieved this output.

**Output 2.3 Improved livelihoods for 10 families through the reactivation of Kabu Tours community Enterprise:** Kabu tours have begun their process to purchase equipments and materials to reactivate their enterprise. Outboard marine motors have been already commissioned but there is a global delay on the supply of these marine motors and the waiting time is more than 6 months. For that reason Kabu Tours have not started tourism activities.

**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.**

Our partner Kabu Tours, working with BICU have had delays with the purchase of marine equipment and the import of materials to locally build their boat. Both have been already commissioned, but it takes 4 to 6 months to receive an outboard engine in Nicaragua after purchasing. For that reason Kabu tour have not started to carry out touristic activities as an enterprise. We expecting this to be solved soon in December so Kabu tours enterprise can retake their activities.

Current socio-political crisis in Nicaragua have affected the speed of work WCS team have been able to execute planned activities. Currently Nicaraguan government is demanding new requisites for NGO's legal registration and it's implementing new controls, which implies to report every activity to be done in the field and wait for authorization to proceed and they also carry out screening of every NGO officer and employee. This have delayed the time and ability of our organization to be able to carry out our work in the field.

We have advanced in the legal registration process and trying to speed up our actions but unfortunately budget allocated for this first year of the project will not be fully executed regarding sustainable livelihood activities. We will be submitting a re-budget change request for the delayed activities related to sustainable livelihoods. We are confident we will be able to recruit available professionals that are "acceptable" to the government so we can execute activities as planned.

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

Discussed with NIRAS-LTS:            No yet                                     Yes/No

Formal Change Request submitted:    No                                    Yes/No    No

Received confirmation of change acceptance    Yes/No    NO

Change request reference if known:

**4a. 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: ████████

**4b. 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.**

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

No other issues.