



**BIODIVERSITY  
CHALLENGE FUNDS**



**Biodiversity Challenge Fund projects Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade  
Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus Biannual Report**

***Note: If there is confidential information in the report that you do not wish to share on  
our website, please make this clear.***

**Deadline for submission: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023**

<b>Project reference</b>	30-024
<b>Project title</b>	Strengthening ecological and socioeconomic resilience in the Atlántida Seascape, Honduras
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Honduras
<b>Lead Partner</b>	Fundación Cayos Cochinos
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Fauna & Flora International Fundación Cuero y Salado (FUCSA) Centro de Estudios Marinos (CEM) Fundación Islas de la Bahía (FIB) La Asociación Pro Comunidades Turísticas de Honduras (LARECOTURH)
<b>Project leader</b>	Marcio Aronne
<b>Date and number of the report (e.g. HYR1)</b>	30/10/2023 HYR1
<b>Project website/blog/social networks</b>	N/A

## **Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed project implementation timetable**

### **Output 1**

#### **1.1 MPA co-managers, with the support of the relevant authorities, conduct regular patrols in the four MPAs to deter poaching of iconic species (manatee, hawksbill, iguana).**

Since April 2023, 242 patrols were conducted in collaboration with the navy, of which 70 were in Cuero y Salado Wildlife Refuge (CSWR) and 172 were in Cayos Cochinos Marine National Monument (CCMNM), resulting in identification of:

- 18 incidents of illegal fishing gear (CSWR and CCMNM)
- 16 cases of non-compliant tourism practices (CCMNM)
- 1 dead manatee (cause of death not identified; CSWR)
- 4 fires (CSWR)
- 2.1km clandestine opening in the CSWR vegetation to enable transit of vehicles and cattle
- 5 instances of iguana hunting (Utila, Bay Islands Marine National Park; BIMNP)

#### **1.2 MPA co-managers conduct monitoring of species (manatee, hawksbill, iguana) and associated critical habitat (estuary, beach, reef, mangrove) within their MPAs, to inform adaptive management and lesson learning on conservation actions implemented.**

- 6 aquatic surveys carried out in CSWR, during which 3 manatees were identified (4 manatees in 2021)
- During the turtle nesting season, 27 nests recorded on CCMNM and 9 turtles tagged (42 nests in 2022)
- 23 iguana surveys conducted on Utila, with a total of 88 sightings (78 sightings in 2022)

#### **1.4 Honduran partners conduct environmental outreach activities with fisher associations, women's groups and the wider community on the importance of flagship species and their habitats (mangroves, flooded forests, estuaries, sandy beaches) and the MPA regulations that protect them.**

In collaboration with other NGOs, FIB has delivered environmental education on a monthly basis in all schools in Utila and the Utila Cays, reaching a total of 350 students.

In CCMNM, an environmental education day for children of East End and Chachahuat (11 boys and 9 girls) was led by volunteers from the turtle programme). The Gararu Festival was held, named after the Garífuna word for hawksbill, consisting of environmental education and strategies to reduce the consumption of turtle egg and shell artefacts (e.g. by painting turtle murals to increase the tourism value of this species and featuring artisans from the communities who make artefacts out of alternative materials).

#### **1.5 Garner voluntary commitment to responsible fishing guidelines for yellowtail snapper and lane snapper in the remaining marine communities. Work with communities and DIGEPESCA to have this approved as a municipal decree.**

In August, CEM and LARECOTURH held a Governance and Access Rights camp, where they presented the responsible fisheries guidelines for yellowtail and lane snapper. These guidelines have been written up into draft ordinances for three seascape municipalities, who have lent their support. If approved, this would see the guidelines pass into municipal law in each jurisdiction.

#### **1.7. Carry out planting of mangroves and native species in priority sites (including important iguana areas, along heavily eroded riverbanks).**

- 4/5 partners have carried out mangrove/native species planting activities, prioritising high flooding areas
- 1,632 mangrove/native species seedlings (3 species) currently growing in CSWR nursery
- 200 mangrove seeds collected by FIB
- 120 coconut and 50 beach grape plants were planted with fishers during the aforementioned Governance and Access Rights camp

#### **1.11 Train relevant Seascape Committee members in the use of SMART, AGRRA and other**

## **standardised methodology for ecological and social impact monitoring across the seascape.**

Three members of the Seascape Committee (1 FCC, 1 CEM and 1 Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment-SERNA) were trained in AGRRA methodology in May. AGRRA monitoring was then undertaken at 30 sites (6 CSWR, 12 Utila, 12 CCMNM) in order to assess the state of reef health in the seascape, in collaboration with Healthy Reefs Initiative (HRI).

### **Output 2**

#### **2.1 Create a business development programme with a focus on environmental sustainability (protected species, appropriate fishing gear, catch sizes and limits), targeting fishers and traders.**

CEM and LARECOTURH have created a development programme focused on responsible artisanal fisheries and consumption. Seven groups of entrepreneurs in the municipality of Balfate were trained in the development of nature-positive business plans, following the Honduran seascape partners being trained in this methodology by Fauna & Flora in 2022.

FCC coordinated training for all Honduran partners in fisheries landing site monitoring methods, aimed at young community scientists, associations and traders, in which 9 community scientists (5 women and 4 men, of which 7 are Garífuna) and 7 technicians (3 FCC, 2 FUCSA, 1 FIB, 1 CEM; 5 women and 2 men) took part. The purpose of this training is to facilitate comparable fisheries landing data collection across the seascape, for decision-making and monitoring the transition to responsible fishing.

#### **2.6 Hold three municipal tasting and marketing fairs of responsibly caught artisanal fish products and a departmental fair in La Ceiba with the involvement of the corresponding authorities, profiling fish that are often wasted due to lower demand and market initiatives supported by the project.**

To celebrate National Day of Artisanal Fisheries, the seascape fisher associations held the first seafood fair, with the aims of sharing their responsible fisheries practices and identifying new potential clients for their produce. The event was attended by 285 small-scale fishers (115 women, 170 men) from 23 associations across the seascape, as well as local, departmental and national authorities.

### **Output 3**

#### **3.1 Working with the existing SWOT analysis, facilitate the Fishers' Roundtable to collectively agree on their vision and the main steps needed to achieve it (e.g. a simplified Theory of Change).**

LARECOTURH and CEM supported the Fishers' Roundtable to review their SWOT and define their mission and vision. This was presented back to them at the 2023 General Assembly.

#### **3.2 Based on the vision, facilitate the annual work plan of the Fishermen's Roundtable and the pathway for regular engagement and sharing of lessons with the National Roundtable.**

At the Governance and Access Rights camp, attended by 58 fishers, the aforementioned SWOT was again reviewed and used to develop a work plan, outlining the activities/initiatives needed to achieve the Roundtable's vision and address their main weaknesses over the next two years.

#### **3.4 Develop in a participatory manner the Roundtable's protocol for the re-election of its Steering Committee, with special emphasis on the importance of including members of the Garífuna communities, women and youth.**

A new Steering Committee was selected during this year's Fishers' Roundtable General Assembly. Of the nine representatives, two are women and one is Garífuna (since 38 years to 78 years).

#### **3.5 Facilitate discussion and compile input from seascape communities to support the reform of the 2017 Fisheries Law and the development of complementary policies on national fisheries and seascape management.**

CEM has presented the initiative they're leading for Honduras to declare a 12-nautical mile exclusive access zone with MPA boundary to all project partners in June. Partners are supporting the technical team to carry out social and biological data collection within the MPAs and grey area. The information will be pulled together into a technical dossier proposing this managed access area to government representatives. The initiative was also presented to and received support from three municipalities and the association of municipalities of central Atlántida (MAMUCA), all of which are supporting with obtaining the necessary social and biological information for municipal ordinances granting the managed access area within their jurisdictions.

### **3.6 Empower marine fishers, especially vulnerable groups, to actively participate in national fisheries discussions.**

National Day of Artisanal Fisheries was celebrated on July 28<sup>h</sup>. See 2.6. Furthermore, CEM undertook a Photo Voice initiative to highlight the role of women in their communities and the barriers they face in relation to access to and use of marine resources. Nineteen women (of which 8 were Garífuna and 4 were aged between 18 and 25) took part.

## **Output 4**

### **4.1 Fauna & Flora facilitates organisational resilience assessments to identify the capacity needs of Honduran partners and subsequently supports the preparation of organisational development plans.**

Fauna & Flora facilitated the Organisational Resilience Assessment (ORC) for CEM, LARECOTURH and FCC, based on which the teams could develop their Organisational Development Plans (ODPs). CEM and LARECOTURH have presented these ODPs to Fauna & Flora, who are working on developing training and mentoring courses based on the identified needs. In their ODPs (developed prior to project start) FIB and FUCSA identified the need to update their strategic plans in order to establish clear organisational priorities, and Fauna & Flora has helped secure funding for this to happen.

### **4.5 Fauna & Flora works individually with FCCs to review their social safeguards and safeguard practices, to identify gaps and support the development and implementation of holistic and well-tailored policies.**

Fauna & Flora shared policy examples with FCC, in particular:

- Child and vulnerable adult protection policy
- Anti-bullying and harassment policy
- Equal opportunities policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

On which Fauna & Flora had presented training to all five Honduran partners of this project in March 2023, during a one-day training session on safeguards and social safeguards. Based on these examples, FCC has developed a draft of its safeguards and social safeguards policy, which is under review by Fauna & Flora teams to provide recommendations and support to finalise a policy that is robust and implementable by FCC, responds to the current context, and can serve as a basis for inductions of new FCC members. The Seascape Facilitator also worked with the Flora & Fauna Safeguards Specialist to generate an analysis of the social safeguards implemented under the Honduras programme, to identify areas for improvement and to have a programme record that will inform next steps.

### **4.6 FFI provides practical training on project development, grant management and reporting to the five Honduran partners. FFI provides mentoring on these throughout the project and particular support to FCC in the grant management of its first Darwin project.**

Fauna & Flora's prepared templates for all Honduran partners and presented training on best practices for financial reporting, with a particular focus on how to prepare reports for Darwin, as well as delivering a 1.5-day training on Good Fund Management.

**2. Detail any notable problems or unexpected events or lessons learned that the project has encountered in the last 6 months. Explain what impact they might have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and schedule of project activities.**

### **Difficulties**

DIGEPESCA has undergone changes in its leadership and representatives that have made it difficult to make decisions and agreements for the seascape, given the repeated loss of momentum when a new representative arrives and needs to be brought up to speed. Our partners have tried to maintain this momentum at the municipal level to mitigate the impacts of DIGEPESCA changes, and remain in close contact with DIGEPESCA representatives.

Coordination and planning for the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA; developed by CARE International) trainings with NGO CARE Guatemala has taken longer than expected due to their low capacity. Instead of waiting on CARE's support, FIB will provide training and share lessons learnt with the other four Honduran partners to undertake CCVAs in additional communities.

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

Discussed with NIRAS: No

Formal request for change submitted: No

Confirmation of acceptance of change: N/A

Reference of the change request, if known: N/A

### **4a. Confirm your actual expenditure for this financial year to date (i.e. 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023).**

Actual expenditure: ██████████

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

**No** Estimated under-utilisation: £

**4c. If yes, you should carefully consider the budgetary needs of your project.** Remember that the funds agreed for this year are only available for the project in this year.

**If you anticipate a significant underspend due to justifiable changes to the project, please submit a request for a budget change as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will accept a new quotation, so please ensure that you have sufficient time to make the appropriate changes if necessary. Do NOT send them in the same email as your report.**

**Note: If you expect to underspend, do not claim more than you expect to spend this year.**

**5. Do you have any other questions related to the project or to the management, monitoring or funding procedures of the BCF?**

Bank transfer fees are significantly higher than expected and not covered by the current budget. FCC will assume the costs of international transfers between UK and USA with its own funds.

**If your project is new and you have received comments that require a response, or if your annual report review has asked you to submit a response with your next six-monthly report, please attach your response to this document.**

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

**Note: Any planned changes to your project schedule/work plan can be addressed in this report, but should also be raised with NIRAS through a change request. Please do NOT send them in the same email.**

Please send your **full report by email to BCF-Reports@niras.com**. The report should be between 2 and 3 pages maximum. **Please indicate the reference number of your project, followed by the specific fund in the header of your email, e.g. Subject: 29-001 Darwin Initiative Semester Report.**