



Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Half Year Report (due 31st October 2021)

Project reference:	IWT072
Project title:	Reducing Demand for Marine Turtle Products in Nicaragua
Country(ies):	Nicaragua
Lead organisation:	Fauna & Flora International
Collaborator(s):	SEE Turtles; SOS Social Solutions (SOS); Eastern Pacific Hawksbill Initiative (ICAPO); National Turtle Network (NTN); World Wide Fund for Nature – UK (WWF-UK).
Project leader:	Alison Gunn
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1):	HYR3
Project website/blog/social media:	www.fauna-flora.org/projects/conserving-marine-turtles-eastern-pacific-nicaragua sonnicas.org/ www.facebook.com/tortugas.nicas.7

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 the end September).

Activities this period, as per the agreed project implementation timetable, have focused on the delivery of the behaviour change campaign under **Output 2** of the project. Campaign activities have been delivered in line with the “*Son Nicas*” campaign communications strategy and workplan developed with the support of the specialised media agency in Y1-2. Activities have focused on the three administrative departments which are key hotspots for the consumption of eggs and shell - Managua, Masaya and Chinandega. Activities have been targeted towards priority consumer groups ‘*Don Jose*’ in all three departments and ‘*Doña Maria*’ at one pilot site in El Viejo in Chinandega. As previously reported, due to Covid-19, the campaign has had a reduced focus on demand for hawksbill shell from international tourists ‘*Rachel*’ due to the collapse in international travel.

Key activities of the “*Son Nicas*” campaign this period included:

Official “*Son Nicas*” Campaign launch event: Held on 4 June 2021, to coincide with World Environment Day, this event brought together national and municipal government representatives, coastal community members, academics, conservationists and target consumers. Whilst ‘*Son Nicas*’ campaign activities began in early 2021, this event was the campaign’s government-endorsed launch. It provided a high-profile opportunity, broadcast live on national radio and reported on Vos TV’s national evening news, to highlight how only with the efforts of all sectors of society will significant changes be made to decrease consumption of turtle products.

Digital/social media: The National Turtle Network Facebook page ([tortugas.nicas.7](https://www.facebook.com/tortugas.nicas.7)) is the lead

digital channel for campaign messages and information, reaching over 10,500 followers, with social media posts linked to the hashtag [#sonnicas](#). The branded campaign website www.sonnicas.org has had further content added during this period, particularly under the [News](#) section, where updates and news of key campaign events (webinars, community events, etc.) are posted. The campaign has enlisted a group 'digital volunteers' of a relevant demographic, who regularly share information posted on the website or on social media, to increase the reach these posts via their contacts.

Radio infomercials: Recognising that the *Don Jose* profile is a patriotic sports fan, in collaboration with national radio station La Primerísima and the *Germán Pomares Ordoñez* National Baseball League, campaign messages have been incorporated into radio commentaries of 112 baseball games throughout the season. Over 2,000 infomercials (5 different messages, on rotation, 18 per game) have been placed within La Primerísima's commentaries during this period, reaching an estimated 150,000 people per game, and are re-broadcast through multiple local radio stations. In addition, La Primerísima's has broadcast 520 campaign infomercials as part of their weekly sports news program "*Círculo de Esperanza*".

Webinar series: The campaign has launched a new online webinar series, hosted via Facebook Live and [YouTube](#), through which different stakeholders are invited to speak on a variety of topics related to marine turtles. Four hour-long webinars were held in this period:

- **"Sea turtles, a natural treasure of Nicaragua."** H. Salazar, FFI Biological Monitoring Specialist; C. Guevara, FFI Behaviour Change Specialist; J. Lezama, FFI Turtle Conservation Technician.
- **"Effects of turtle egg consumption for humans"**. Guests: Dr. O. M. Acevedo, Cardiologist; Lic. I. Pérez, Nutritionist.
- **"Conservation of sea turtles: A livelihood for coastal communities."** E. Gómez, FFI Specialist in Community Livelihoods; C. Sevilla, President of the Astillero Women Weavers; S. Alvarado, promoter of ecotourism services in Estero Padre Ramos.
- **"Aquatic monitoring of hawksbill turtles... an unforgettable experience."** J. Martínez, FFI Turtle Conservation Technician; K. Gago, "Son Nicas" campaign volunteer; L. García, "Son Nicas" target profile.

These webinars are proving a valuable, neutral and low-cost channel for sharing a huge amount of detailed information with key stakeholders, such as businesses in the tourism and restaurant sector. So far, each webinar has been viewed up to 1,500 times.

Engaging influencers - Celebrity Chef: The popular national Chef Juan Carlos has publically endorsed the campaign. He is working to promote the campaign through his weekly *Noches Con Sabor* TV cookery programme, social media channels (he has a following of >17,000 on [Facebook](#)) and community events. He has developed and promoted alternative recipes, i.e. substituting turtle eggs with fish or quails eggs, and has been talking about the campaign and debunking myths about the aphrodisiac properties of turtle eggs during his monologues during cooking. In June, two members of the FFI team [participated](#) in Chef Juan Carlos' TV show and interviewed him on Canal 14. Campaign events in which Juan Carlos has played a key role include: a gastronomic 'live tasting' event in Chinandega in July, in collaboration with La Parillada restaurant which has committed to not selling turtle eggs (a poll during the event indicated that ~40% of the clientele of this restaurant eat turtle eggs), and a gastronomic stall at the Hawksbill Festival in Padre Ramos in September, attended by ~800 people.

Engaging influencers - Musicians: The campaign has collaborated with a Nicaraguan musician in the composition and production of a pop song linked to the campaign. Since being finalised, the song has been played and shared widely – via radio (including on regular programmes), at all the campaign's community and virtual events, and on social media. A virtual concert is being organised for December, via Facebook live.

Engaging influencers - Sports Commentators / Personalities: In addition to working with radio sports commentators (as described above), the campaign has reached out to players in the national baseball league, and are in dialogue with one player on plans to endorse the campaign and engage in activities in Q3.

Engaging influencers – Faith Groups: The project has facilitated a link between Nicaraguan church leaders and the Faith Plans initiative, with the church expressing interest in joining other faith groups around the world in developing a Long Term Plan for the Environment to drive

positive action on climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development. Whilst this Plan is outside the scope of this project, it provides a framework to incorporate messaging around relevant local environmental issues into sermons and church priorities, including regarding the illegal trade in turtle products.

Community events: *Son Nicas* campaign messages have been shared through all relevant community and stakeholders events delivered by FFI's wider conservation programmes in Nicaragua throughout this period. These include annual turtle festivals, such as the Hawksbill Festival held in Padre Ramos in September, training for fishers and beach cleaning events – all of which are valuable opportunities to engage with local people and members of the target consumer groups. FFI has also taken the opportunity to invite key members of the target profiles to spend a day with our conservation teams conducting in-water turtle monitoring activities in the Padre Ramos Estuary, to learn about had experience turtles first-hand. So far, 25 people have participated across three monitoring activity days. These experiences have powerful potential for catalysing behaviour change in individuals. Following the experience, one participant from Chinandega, and an active consumer of turtle eggs, said: *"From this experience I took a great deal of knowledge. In short, every time I ate a turtle egg I never thought about the consequences... I had no idea about the problem that I created by being a consumer of turtle eggs. From now on I promise not to eat turtle eggs and to spread the message of this beautiful campaign: to protect turtles at all costs."*

Dissemination of campaign materials: To increase the visibility and recognition of the campaign, its slogans and logos have been disseminated on clothing (mainly t-shirts), stickers, car bumper stickers, reusable coffee cups (coffee being highly culturally important in Nicaragua!) and banners. Signs have also been produced for bars, restaurants and jewellery shops who have committed publically not to sell turtle products, with these also being [recognised via social media](#). Work to engage more businesses in this way will continue in the next period.

The project team have also been working on plans for end-of-project monitoring and lesson sharing under **Output 3** of the project. The planned regional lesson/resource-sharing event will be held virtually in Q4 and provide an opportunity to share experiences with turtle conservationists from multiple neighbouring countries. Post-campaign monitoring of impact is scheduled for January and, as far as possible, will follow the methods used to evaluate project baseline.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for COVID-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

N/A

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of COVID-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Despite the context of the Covid pandemic, the project has advanced well in this period.

Overall, as previously reported, due to Covid-19, the campaign has had a reduced focus on demand for hawksbill shell from international tourists '*Rachel*' due to the collapse in international travel. It has therefore had a greater focus on target audiences inside Nicaragua.

The pandemic has restricted our ability to plan and host large events as part of the campaign's approach. Also, due to Covid risks, some people have remained hesitant to participate even in smaller events, especially when we are reaching out to new audiences - despite risk reduction

measures being put in place wherever possible.

Nevertheless, we have been able to adapt the campaign to increase use of virtual / digital tools for data collection and to have an increased focus on use of radio and digital communications to reach target audiences.

In terms of budgetary impacts, a Change Request is in preparation regarding reallocation of budget from international travel (for the final year lesson-sharing event, as this will now be held online) to deliver specific campaign activities and cover a small shortfall in end-of-project monitoring costs.

2c. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Discussed with LTS:	No
Formal change request submitted:	No
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.

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. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to IWT Challenge Fund management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Thanks for your support, as ever!

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 DO NOT send these in the same email.****

Please send your **completed report by email to IWT-Fund@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: IWT001 Half Year Report.**