



The GEF Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project

Project Progress Report

Reporting Period	From:	January 2016	To:	June 2016
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1. PROJECT GENERAL INFORMATION

National Project Code & Title:	TL2 2136: Incentivising community engagement in dugong and seagrass conservation in Timor-Leste through volunteer ecotourism
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Project Partner(s):	Blue Ventures
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Location (country, region/ district and commune/ city/ village/ region etc.)	Timor-Leste
Of which areas under protection (please indicate the name and size of protected areas or locally managed marine areas, if applicable)	NA

Project start date	1 August 2015	Project intended completion date	30 September 2018
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1. PROJECT PROGRESS

1. Narrative of project progress during the past semester by Project Activity

2.1.1 Identify ecotourism site(s) and partner community(s)
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Following the identification of Atauro as Blue Ventures' base for ecotourism activities in Timor-Leste and Barry's Place in Beloi as the provider of accommodation and food, expeditions commenced as planned on 20th March. It is our preference to operate a multi-site project to spread economic opportunities and the sites may move throughout the life of the project according to local conditions and project needs. Work to identify further communities for this purpose is ongoing.

2.1.2 Establish ecotourism project

The remaining project team began employment as planned at the end of January and start of February. However, during initial medical examinations one candidate could no longer be employed in the role. With an increase in projected volunteer numbers, the position was split into two and roles were offered to Amos da Costa and Jemima Gomes in April. Amos and Jemima have since commenced employment as dive and science assistants, with Jemima confirmed as the first woman from Atauro to have completed her PADI Open Water Diver certification!

All equipment has arrived in country and is in use. Significant delays were experienced in the shipping of the boat and main SCUBA compressor to Timor-Leste but we were able to source local providers for these services whilst waiting for the arrival of the equipment and so the impact on the project was minimal.

On May 4th, we held a community stakeholder meeting for local and national partners, local governmental representatives and, members of the local traditional and community leadership at Barry's Place on Atauro. The meeting was well attended locally with representatives from four communities across the island attending and receiving an introduction to our work and progress to date. All attendees were made aware of Blue Ventures' plans for further local employment and training of local community members over the lifespan of the project.

2.1.3 Ecotourism project starts running

As previously stated, the first of our discovery expeditions commenced on March 20th with eight international volunteers taking part. To date, a further two expeditions have taken place with four and seven volunteers respectively and the fourth expedition is currently underway with our first full complement of 12 volunteers so we have already exceeded our initial target of 25 tourists in our first year of the project. All but one of these 31 volunteers have spent more than 25 nights in country meaning a total of 562 bed nights.

We are monitoring ecotourism expenditure in local communities and early results suggest that most volunteers spend between \$100 - \$200 whilst they are here in the local community on items such as souvenirs, trips and food and drink.

2.1.4 Ecotourism model works with community(s) to collect baseline and impact data on status of broader marine environment

Efforts to collect baseline data on the status of Atauro's local marine resources are in the early stages, with ecotourists and staff currently in the discovery phase of the project, carrying out exploratory dives, snorkels and manta tows across the island. Environmental conditions in the coastal waters of Atauro are changeable and our science and conservation coordinators continue to seek methodologies for baseline ecological data collection that are both robust and within the grasp of our ecotourists and eventually CBNRM surveyors.

2.1.5 Ecotourism model evaluated and adapted to maximise community benefits and long-term sustainability.

The first three expeditions of 2016 were marketed to ecotourists as "discovery expeditions" and sold at a discounted rate on the understanding

that this phase would act as a soft launch to test expedition operations, procedures and facilities. Participants on these expeditions have been encouraged to provide candid feedback on their experience which is shared with the teams in London and Timor-Leste. To date, several suggestions made by ecotourists have been incorporated and this model of feedback, incorporation and improvement will continue throughout the lifespan of the project and beyond. Our stakeholder meeting also provided a forum for members of the local community to provide suggestions on how we can integrate and involve the ecotourism project with local projects and initiatives. The most common request to maximise community benefits was to employ additional Atauro residents as the project develops.

1.2.1 Identify target communities/areas for CBNRM

During the stakeholder meeting held on May 4th, we were able to identify the villages of Akrema and Uaro-ana in the north of Atauro as communities that we believe would be receptive to taking part in CBNRM and co-management activities. It is in these communities that we will concentrate initial efforts to identify and train CBNRM surveyors. We are recruiting a Community Conservation Coordinator to start in the next few months who will focus on the community integration activities and support the team to achieve these activities.

1.2.2 Map local resources and resource use patterns (threats, status, habitats, priority species etc) with community.

As the sole GEF Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project partner with substantial in-situ operations on Atauro, we are working with both the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and Conservation International to ensure that our work to collect data on local resources and resource use patterns dovetails with the work they are currently undertaking in their respective projects. We will be working with CI to carry out the Atauro component of the CMS Dugong questionnaire with staff, ecotourists and members of the local community. These surveys will help us to further identify target communities under activity 1.2.1 and priority sites for activity 3.1.1

1.2.4 Community members identified for training in ecological monitoring

As Science and Dive Assistants, Amos and Jemima will make significant contributions to the collection of coral reef, dugong and seagrass data they are currently undergoing training in species identification and marine habitat monitoring methodologies. Upon completion of their training, Amos and Jemima will play a key role in training both ecotourist researchers and local community members in CBNRM methodologies as work under this activity progresses.

3.1.1 Priority sites for dugong and seagrass ecosystems from activity 1.2.2 highlighted.

We refer to progress on activity 1.2.2 for progress under this activity.

3.1.2 Monitoring methods for seagrass and dugong sites defined

On 25th May, our in country team met with the national focal point Agosto Pinto and representatives from all other GEF TL projects to discuss opportunities for collaboration and communication across projects. The importance of aligning activities between the TL projects was highlighted during the meeting and it was agreed that projects TL1 and TL2 should make efforts to coordinate their mapping and monitoring components with Blue Ventures resources being offered to assist TL1 with their surveys around Atauro. As such, whilst efforts have been made to establish contact with the teams responsible for conducting these surveys at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, we are yet to define monitoring methods for seagrass habitats.

1. **Project implementation progress**

Outputs & Activities	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of end of reporting period expressed in %	Describe any problems in delivery and any changes/mitigation action required.
Output 2.1 Management and incentive mechanisms and tools for sustainable fisheries – pilots and capacity building (local community and government)	NA	NA	NA
2.1.1 Identify ecotourism site(s) and partner community(s)	First site identified and running successfully. Expect to identify other sites later this year	50%	We have identified our ecotourism site for Y1 and expeditions are going well. The next phase will be to identify other sites where parts of the ecotourists stay could take place.
2.1.2 Establish ecotourism project	July	95%	
2.1.3 Ecotourism project starts running	March '16	100%	
2.1.4 Ecotourism model works with community(s) to collect baseline and impact data on status of broader marine environment	September 2018	13%	Our field staff have found environmental conditions in the waters around Atauro to be challenging with strong tidal currents, downwellings and diverse benthic topography proving obstacles to the design and implementation of a robust methodology for data collection by ecotourists and CBNRM surveyors. Staff have requested and have been provided with survey equipment to trial rapid data collection methodologies that can be implemented in these conditions without any detrimental impact to the quality of collected data.
2.1.5 Ecotourism model evaluated	September	13%	

and adapted to maximise community benefits and long-term sustainability	2018		
Output 1.2 Capacity developed for community-based stewardship (conservation and monitoring of dugongs & seagrass)	NA	NA	NA
1.2.1 Identify target communities/areas for CBNRM	July 2016	30%	The identification of target communities for CBNRM continues to be in the early stages with a number of communities identified as having seagrass resources that may benefit from CBNRM but activities towards developing relationships with these communities are still in the early stages. The communities in question are in the north of the island and two of our Timorese staff have family in the community that will help facilitate and introduce our work to local leaders and stakeholders. Additionally the new Community Conservation Coordinator will support the team to move these activities forwards over the next few months.
1.2.2 Map local resources and resource use patterns (threats, status, habitats, priority species etc) with community	November 2016	10%	Work towards this activity is partially dependant on activity 1.2.1 so has been delayed whilst we continue to identify communities. However, we are coordinating with Conservation International to assist with activities under the TL1 project carrying out the CMS Dugong survey in Atauro communities. This will provide a framework to map community perception of their local seagrass resources and the frequency of dugong sightings in local waters.
1.2.4 Community members identified for training in ecological monitoring	October 2016	0%	This activity is critically dependent on the progress of activity 1.2.1 and will begin in the next month or so.
Output 3.1 Critical knowledge gaps (dugongs and seagrass ecosystems) identified and surveys initiated/ completed	NA	NA	NA
3.1.1 Priority sites for dugong and seagrass ecosystems from activity 1.2.2 highlighted.	September 2016	15%	Work towards this activity is partially dependant on activity 1.2.1 so has been delayed whilst we continue to identify communities and the areas and resources considered by

			them to be critical. We refer to the planned hire of a Community Conservation Coordinator to assist with this and other activities.
3.1.2 Monitoring methods for seagrass and dugong sites defined	July 2016	15%	Problems with communications across projects have prevented our ability to date to define seagrass and dugong monitoring methodologies in a way that will allow our project to align with and support mapping and monitoring components of other projects. Communications are improving and we hope that we will be able to define these methods in the coming weeks.

1. Risk and risk management

Please describe internal and external risks (examples included in brackets) that could affect successful implementation of project activities and the proposed risk mitigation measures.

Risk group	Description	Risk level (Low/Medium/High)	Mitigation measures
Project Management (team capacity, internal communication, co-financing, budget, financial management, reporting, etc.)	Potential failure of project management of a new team in a new country	Low	At Blue Ventures we have 13 years of experience of delivering volunteer ecotourism projects in different countries and continents and a strong HQ team available to support in-country staff on all aspects of the project (operations, financial management and reporting). We will ensure sufficient resources are made available to this project and maintain close contact and supervision of the project and project team. There have been two visits from HQ staff in the first quarter of 2016 to support the project.
Socio-cultural issues (external communications, capacity of and work with stakeholders, cultural aspects)	Timor-Leste is a new country for Blue Ventures ecotourism operations and there are unknown socio-cultural risks to our operations and the project.	Medium	We will maintain close communication and take advice from in-country partners and advisers. We have selected our staff with the aim of giving us an appropriate mix of skills and experience to be effective in Timor-Leste. Our Country Coordinator has 6 years of experience working

			and living in Timor-Leste, our joint Conservation and Science Coordinators have lived and worked in different developing world countries and have broad experience of ecotourism and conservation projects. We have also recruited three local staff who will be attuned to cultural and social issues.
Political risks (Political stability in country, political impacts on the project)	Timor-Leste is a new country for Blue Ventures ecotourism operations and there are unknown political risks to our operations and the project.	Medium	We will maintain close communication with our team, follow all news sources and UK Government advice and take advice from in-country partners and advisers and the Government of Timor-Leste.
Environmental risks (severe weather events/ disasters, natural causes negatively affecting project areas, habitats and species)	Severe weather leads to cancellations of an expedition, or dissatisfaction of ecotourists if activities severely affected.. Outbreak of dengue fever or other mosquito borne illness affecting health of project staff and ecotourists	Low/Medium Medium/high	Seasonal weather variations within the ecotourism project area have been accounted for within the schedule of the expeditions. However, severe weather events could cause the cancellation or postponement of the ecotourism project for safety reasons and severe weather affecting fresh water supplies has also been raised as a concern that will be monitored closely. We are coordinating with our accommodation provider to ensure stagnant pools of water are cleaned to prevent mosquito breeding. All accommodation has mosquito nets that are fit for purpose and all ecotourists and staff are advised of the need for adequate clothing and insect repellent during evening and morning hours. Clear medical guidance and protocols have been established to ensure that all volunteers and staff are carefully monitored for signs and symptoms of dengue fever and that any suspected cases of dengue fever receive the appropriate care as soon as possible.
Other (please specify)	Financial/tourism viability of the project	Medium	Launching a new volunteer project in a new destination is always a risk. We have the experience of establishing projects in 4 countries in the last 13 years and this experience and expertise in product development, marketing and communications will be called upon to

			ensure the success of the Timor-Leste volunteer ecotourism project. Staff resources from our Head Office operations and marketing team are being disproportionately allocated to this project to give it every chance of success.
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1. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

1. Please describe activities for monitoring and evaluation carried out during the reporting period.

Examples include: baseline data collection, stakeholder surveys, field surveys, steering committee meetings to assess project progress, peer review of documentation to ensure quality, mid-term review, etc.
Do not include routine project reporting.

An expedition feedback form is being completed by ecotourists at the end of their expedition to help us monitor and improve the on-site experience. Some changes have already been made as a result of this feedback including adding further Timorese cultural and language lessons to the expedition activities. We also carry out mid-expeditions feedback sessions in groups and one-to-one sessions with ecotourists to monitor and improve ongoing expedition experiences.

During our stakeholder meeting with members of the community and project partners from Dili, we invited feedback from the local community on perceptions of our activities to date and ways in which we can best inform of the community of and integrate them in our future activities.

With the commencement of the expedition phase of our project, we have begun the process of collecting baseline data on the status of the marine environment of Atauro. We are using easily taught and replicable methodologies similar to those used by Blue Ventures in Madagascar and Belize and adapting to prevailing environmental conditions. To make a rapid baseline assessment of coastal environments and identify future sites for exploration and assessment for future monitoring, we have been employing a video-assisted manta tow methodology. To carry out assessments of reef sites of interest, we have employed Point Intercept Transect and roving diver survey methodologies to assess benthic status and fish populations respectively.

We are currently trialling a version of the CMS Dugong survey to deploy to local villages during the upcoming reporting period.

1. **OTHER INFORMATION**

1. **Meetings**

Meeting type	Title	Venue	Dates	Convened by	Organised by	No. of participants	Report issued Y/N	Language	Dated
1. Partnership agreement signing meeting	Blue Ventures/ZE ESM MoU signing	Oe-Cusse Special Administrative Region and Zonas Especias de Economia Social de Mercado de Timor-Leste (ZEESM)	28th January	ZEESM	ZEESM	9	Y	Portuguese /English	N
2. Partners consultation meeting	Partners consultation meeting	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment (MCIE)	29th January	BV/MCIE	BV/MCIE	8	N	NA	NA
3. Partners Consultation meeting	Partners consultation meeting	Ministry of Tourism	29th January	BV	BV	4	N	NA	NA
4. Partners consultation meeting	Partners consultation meeting	Barry's Place, Atauro	30th January	BV	BV	7	N	NA	NA
5. Partners consultation meeting	Partners consultation meeting	Blue Ventures' office, Dili	1st February	BV	BV	5	N	NA	NA
6. Partners consultation	Partners consultation	Ministry of Agriculture	8th February	BV	BV/MAP	7	N	NA	NA

meeting	meeting	and Fisheries (MAP)							
7. Partners consultations meeting	Partners consultation meeting	Conservation International, Dili	15th February	BV/CI	BV/CI	6	N	NA	NA
8. Potential partners meeting	Potential partners meeting	Timor Plaza, Dili	19th February	BV	BV	4	N	NA	NA
9. Partners consultation meeting	Partners consultation meeting	MCIE	15th March	BV	BV	5	N	NA	NA
10. Potential partners meeting	Potential partners meeting	Krung Thep restaurant, Dili	16th March	BV/Empreza Diak	BV	5	N	NA	NA
11. Press conference	Blue Ventures Expeditions launch press event	Dili Port	21st March	BV	BV	20+	Y	English, Portuguese , Tetun	NA
12. Tourism stakeholder meeting	Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) destination development plan workshop	Barry's Place, Atauro	25th April	CTI/WWF	CTI/WWF	20+	N	NA	NA
13. Community Stakeholders meeting	Blue Ventures Community Stakeholder meeting	Barry's Place, Atauro	4th May	BV/Barry's Place	BV/Barry's Place	30+	Y	English	NA
14. Partners communication meeting	GEF Seagrass and Dugong	Conservation International, Dili	25th May	GEF Timor-Leste NFC/CI/BV	GEF Timor-Leste NFC/CI	6	N	NA	NA

	project TL partners meeting								
15. GEF Project NFC Meeting	GEF NFC Update Meeting	CRS Conference room Dili	10th June	GEF Timor-Leste NFC	GEF Timor-Leste NFC	20+	N	English / Tetum	NA

1. **List(s) of meeting participants**


No.	Name of participant	Nationality
1.	Richard Nimmo (BV), Greg Duncan (BV), Jen Craighill (BV), Sean Clement (BV), Claudio Providas (UNDP Timor-Leste Country Director), Farrukh Moriani (UNDP Special Advisor to the Oe-Cusse Special Administrative Region and Zonas Especias de Economia Social de Mercado de Timor-Leste (ZEESM)), Regio da Cruz Salu (Regional Agricultural Secretary, ZEESM), Elizabeth Amaral (ZEESM Project Manager, UNDP), Mari Alkatiri (President of Authority of Oe-Cusse SAR and ZEESM)	British, Australian, Colombian, Pakistani, Timorese
2.	Richard Nimmo, Greg Duncan, Jen Craighill, Sean Clement, Agosto Pinto (National Focal Point, CBD, Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Environment (MCIE), Rui Peres (Director for Biodiversity, MCIE), Aires Guterres (MCIE)	
3.	Greg Duncan, Richard Nimmo, Sean Clement, Jose Quintas (Acting Director General of Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture)	British, Australian, Timorese
4.	Greg Duncan, Richard Nimmo, Sean Clement, Jen Craighill, Estavao Marques, Antonio Araujo (BV), Barry Hinton (Barry's Place)	British, Australian, Timorese
5.	Greg Duncan, Richard Nimmo, Sean Clement, Jen Craighill, Aires Guterres	British, Australian, Timorese
6.	Greg Duncan, Sean Clement, Jen Craighill, Almerita dos Santos (BV) Aires Guterres, Narciso Almeida de Carvalho (Director General of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF)), Jose Montero (MAF - Department for the Protection and Conservation of Marine Resources), Lucas Fernandes (MAF - Investigation and Management of Marine Resources)	British, Australian, Timorese
7.	Greg Duncan, Sean Clement, Jen Craighill (BV), Trudiann Dale, Anselmo Amaral (Conservation International)	British, Australian, Timorese
8.	Greg Duncan, Sean Clement, Jen Craighill (BV), David Mills (Worldfish)	Australian, British
9.	Greg Duncan, Sean Clement, Jen Craighill, Almerita dos Santos (BV), Rui Peres (MCIE)	Australian, British, Timorese

10.	Greg Duncan, Sean Clement, Jen Craighill (BV), Maria Amado, Filipe Alaite (Empreza Di'ak)	Australian, British, Portuguese
11.	Greg Duncan, Sean Clement, Jen Craighill, Almerita dos Santos (BV) Agosto Pinto (MCIE), Rui Peres (MCIE), Aires Gutteres (MCIE) Claudio Providas (UNDP) Maria Amado (Empreza Di'ak), Claire Garner, Frederik Bjare, Neeraja Natarajan, Melissa Tolley, Joshua Clee, Monika Beck, Francesca Woodman, Alexis Unzeitig (Blue Ventures Ecotourists) Kevin Austin (Coral Triangle Foundation)	Australian, British, Portuguese, Timorese, Colombian, Danish, Indian, German, American
12.	Sean Clement, Jennifer Craighill, Jemima Gomes, Amos da Costa (BV), Kevin Austin (CTF), Barry Hinton (Barry's Place) Janet Mackay (TRC Tourism), Charlotte Prouse, Carl Solomon (Destination Marketing Store), Avelino Pereira Fernandes (Grupo Turismo Atauro/Roman Luan), Helen Abbott (PhD Candidate) Volker Katzung (Atauro Island Dive Resort), Birgitt Hermann, Sherry Ryan (Empreza Di'ak), Manuel Barreto, (Xefi de Suco)	British, Timorese, Australian, German, American
13.	Greg Duncan, Sean Clement, Jennifer Craighill, Jemima Gomes, Amos da Costa, Almerita dos Santos (BV), Kevin Austin (CTF), Barry Hinton (Barry's Place), Avelino Pereira Fernandes (Grupo Turismo Atauro/Roman Luan), Helen Abbott (PhD Candidate) Volker Katzung (Atauro Island Dive Resort), Birgitt Hermann, Sherry Ryan (Empreza Di'ak), Manuel Barreto, Elias Morata, Francisco Correia, Anibal Gomes, Isabue Payares, Lucia de Araujo, Ester M Da Costa, Juliao Lutero, Luis Da Costa, Alberto Flavas, Felis Lopes, Fredo A De Jesus, Julio Ximenes, Zito F Ximenes, Jose Gereiao, Marcos Martins, Luis Faustino, Pedro Martinos, Pedro Tame, Joao da Costa, Santiago Da Costa, Alcuio Fernandes, Fernando S Saldanho (stakeholders and representatives of the Atauro community), Aires Gutteres	Australian, British, Timorese, German, American,
14.	Greg Duncan, Sean Clement (BV), Agosto Pinto, Aires Guterres (MCIE), Trudiann Dale (Conservation International)	Australian, British, Timorese
15.	Greg Duncan, Trudiann Dale (CI), Rui Pires, Augusto Pinto, Aires Gutteres, Joao Carlos Soares (MCIA), Lino Martins (MAF) + others.	Australian, Timorese

1. **Documents, other printed materials, videos, and soft products (such as CDs or websites)**

No	Type	Title	Author(s) Editor(s)	Publisher	ISBN	Publication date
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1	Website pages promoting the volunteer ecotourism project	https://blueventures.org/volunteer/timor-leste/		BV	NA	NA
2	Website news article	https://blueventures.org/catalysing-marine-conservation-in-the-coral-triangle/		BV	NA	NA

Name of Project Manager: Richard Nimmo		Name of Project Manager Supervisor: NA	
Signature: 	Date: 7/7/16	Signature:	Date: