

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Agyemang Opoku
Project Title	Strengthening the Resilience of the Ecotourism-Dependent Community-Based Marine Turtle Conservation Initiative in the Midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Ghana
Application ID	34617-1
Date of this Report	2 nd June 2022

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Increase the awareness and empower the local communities to curtail the spread of COVID-19 and support the rehabilitation of key marine turtles nesting sites in the Western region of Ghana				The project team were able to complete all the activities planned for this objective with an initial focus on interviewing local fishermen and households on their perception on sea turtles and impact of COVID 19 on their businesses. Engagement with local communities continued with visits to their homes and radio programs (EBIANC 100.5 MHz) to share information on the need to protect sea turtles and create awareness on the measures for curtailing COVID 19. We were able to reach and sensitise over 2,500 inhabitants. Reusable branded face masks and hand sanitisers were shared. This objective was culminated with beach clean-up at three local beaches with the involvement of local clean up clubs and residents.
Ensure continuous protection of the nesting population of marine turtles visiting the Coastline of Ghana amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.				Achieving this objective involved the training of nine local eco-guides to perform beach patrols at night. The beach patrols were conducted at night for 5 months to deter poachers and relocate exposed and unsafe turtle eggs. Relocated eggs were kept in hatcheries until they hatched. In all, over 2000 eggs were released during the nesting season. Two locally managed hatcheries were renovated for safe keeping of all the eggs until hatchlings were guided back to sea during the local festival period where visitors took part in this activity.

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- a) All the requirements for the effective protection of sea turtle eggs were provided to include training on the significance of sea turtle to aquatic ecosystem,

provision of all PPE and required equipment for patrols and provision of stipend for patrol team members during the nesting season.

- b) In all, 2357 sea turtle eggs were protected from poachers in three major nesting sites along a 20 km stretch of beach in the western region of Ghana, with over 80% hatching success rate. All these hatchlings were guided back to sea through the project.
- c) Pre- and post-awareness assessment of local perceptions showed an increase in local awareness on the need to conserve sea turtles to enhance marine biodiversity and improve fishing yield.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

Many coastal dwellers in the project area embraced the project concept, taking part in beach clean-ups, community sensitisation, and phoning into radio education programmes. A small group of suspected poachers registered their displeasure at our night beach patrols at the onset of the project, which was resolved with engagement with the youth leadership of local communities there were no major hurdles.

Because the project commenced at the start of the sea turtle nesting season, existing hatcheries were used for keeping the eggs until the end of the season when they were renovated.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

The project commenced with community entry and engagement with fishermen, local guides, and community leaders from the three selected communities of Cape Three Point, Akwidaa and Benyin. This was followed by interviews in the stated communities where over 100 individuals were interviewed to shape the project team understanding of local perception to sea turtle conservation. The project focused on the use of radio communication to reach an estimated 2500 people within the project landscape and beyond and distributing face masks and hand sanitisers to interviewed locals. The project has enjoyed warm relations with all project communities and where grievances were raised about the night patrols the project team addressed it without creating anymore challenges. Locals were part of beach clean ups organised throughout the project with local clean up groups leading the clean-up activities.

The project envisaged an improvement in ecotourism visits to the landscape, and this is already being witnessed. Our inquiry from the tourism board could not provide us with the exact increase in visits but local accounts our observations attested to this.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, ACI has established strong alliance with some tourist industry operators in the region to support the beach patrols and beach clean-ups among others. The refurbished hatchery will be able to contain in excess of 3000 eggs and we are looking forward to extending the sensitisation and patrols to other areas in order to save many more sea turtle species to include green, leatherback and olive ridley. Also, to recycle plastic waste from the beaches, we envisage using them to construct more hatcheries along the beach.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

We had communicated the project outcome to locals from the project communities, selected ecotourism centres and coastline hotels in the western region of Ghana. Our project was showcased by our associates at the maiden African Scholarship Program on turtle, in Senegal in early 2022.

We also shared outcomes/ results of the nesting season with the Sea of the World Sea Turtle Program (SWOT) community where we share nesting season data each year.

We are planning to share the whole project outcome at the 2023 International Sea Turtle Symposium. We also plan to continue collecting nesting data which will be published in accredited scientific journals.

7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

The important next steps are:

- Continued beach patrols during the nesting season (which is about to commence).
- Stakeholder engagement and sensitisation to reduce poaching (turtles and eggs) and pollution at the critical sites.
- Increase the number of hatcheries using recycled plastics from recovered from the beaches and surrounding areas.

8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes, the foundation's logo was branded with reusable facemasks, protected jackets, and mentioned in radio jingles and live sessions.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

Agyemang Opoku – Project lead. Coordinated the project

Kwame Paul – Project Assistant. Assisted the project lead on logistics

Cosmos Etse – Community Engagement Officer. Engaged directly with local communities

Frank Manu – Monitoring and data entry

10. Any other comments?

The project was highly successful. Additional funding for its sustainability is key.







