

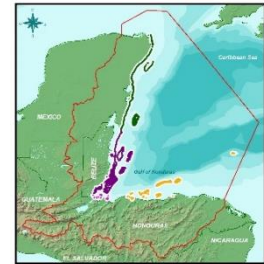


# REGIONAL STRATEGIC WORKSHOP

## Building Resilience and Addressing Risk in the Mesoamerican Reef

### BACKGROUND

The Mesoamerican Reef (MAR) is the largest coral reef system in the Atlantic Ocean, stretching over 1,000 kilometers along the coastline of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras. The MAR harbors a diversity of ecosystems, such as wide mangrove forests, seagrass meadows, coastal lagoons, and coral reefs. These systems provide essential environmental services that contribute to the livelihoods of communities and the economic growth of the MAR countries.



Within this context, the MAR reefs are an asset of natural infrastructure that protects coastal populations against the impact of hurricanes and storms. Recent studies, such as the economic valuation of the MAR, financed by the Inter-American Development (IDB), estimate the annual economic value of the different environmental services of the MAR, in which US\$183 million are accounted to fisheries, US\$3.9 trillion to tourism, and between US\$320 and 438 million to shoreline protection.<sup>1</sup>

However, the MAR and the ecosystem services it provides are at risk despite its biological richness and economic importance. Anthropogenic activities, such as overfishing, non-sustainable coastal development, and solid waste and wastewater contamination, threaten the integrity and health of ecosystems in the region. Moreover, the increasing extreme climatic events, such as hurricanes, heighten other threats and intensify reef degradation, thus reducing its capacity to provide services to multiple beneficiaries, particularly local communities.

Moreover, although governments seek to address these issues urgently, their capacities to act are limited. Also, in some cases, coral reefs are not considered in policy instruments or funding strategies to address risk in coastal marine areas.

Therefore, the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD, for its initials in Spanish), within the framework of the Integrated Ridge-to-Reef Management of the Mesoamerican Reef Ecoregion Project (MAR2R), together with MAR Fund through the Reef Rescue Initiative, propose a strategic workshop with the participation of several stakeholders from the region. The purpose of this workshop is to coordinate actions and efforts that contribute to the recovery and resilience of the Mesoamerican Reef.

<sup>1</sup> 2021. Economic valuation of the ecosystem services of the Mesoamerican Reef, and the allocation and distribution of these values / Itziar Ruiz de Gauna, Anil Markandya, Laura Onofri, Francisco (Patxi) Greño, Javier Warman, Norma Arce, Alejandra Navarrete, Marisol Rivera, Rebeca Kobelkowsky, Mayela Vargas, Marisol Hernández; editors, Santiago Bucaraman, Gregory Watson. (IDB Working Paper Series).



## GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP

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To strengthen the economic value of the MAR region by coordinating different sectors and their agendas to achieve sustainable results that will contribute to the recovery and resilience of the Mesoamerican Reef.

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

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1. To promote the economic value of MAR reefs and the ecosystem services they provide so that steps are taken to build reef resilience, marine spatial planning, and a blue economy.
2. To promote synergy and coordination among regional and national authorities to implement applicable policies, strategies, and instruments to address the risk and build resilience in the Mesoamerican Reef.
3. To strengthen the capacities of specialists and national and regional authorities regarding the strategies that address risk and build resilience in the Mesoamerican Reef.

## AGENDA

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### Day 1. Brief thematic presentations and discussion

The agenda will include summarized presentations about technical topics on which to focus the discussion and coordination among stakeholders:

1. Economic valuation of the Mesoamerican Reef and the environmental services it provides to strengthen its resilience to risk.
2. Financial sustainability for the recovery and resilience of the Mesoamerican Reef.
3. Applicable public policies and strategies to building coastal marine resilience and address risk in the Mesoamerican Reef.
4. Set up regional protocols for restoration, a blue economy, and the harmonization of discharge standards in the Mesoamerican Reef.
5. A discussion forum based on key questions and statements, with the support of a moderator who will ask the questions and guide the discussion.

### Day 2. First part. Brief thematic presentations and discussion

1. Regional tools for information and data exchange and management.
2. A discussion forum based on key questions, with the support of a moderator who will ask the questions and guide the discussion.

### Day 2. Second part

High-level presentations to establish the coordination among sectors and agendas to build resilience in reefs and coastal marine areas in the MAR. How regional authorities implement effective policies, tools, and instruments for risk management in the region.



## RESULTS AND MAIN OUTPUTS

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- Government pledges that support applicable national and regional strategies, instruments, and tools to address the risk and build resilience in the MAR.
- Signing of the Memorandum or Letter of Understanding to consolidate coordination among stakeholders and sectors.
- Workshop reports and agreement points.

## SCHEDULE AND FORMAT

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- The workshop is scheduled to take place in a virtual format on Tuesday, 23rd, and Wednesday, 24th of November 2021, from 8:00 a. m. to 12:30 p. m.
- There will be Spanish-English-Spanish interpretation available
- The workshop will have keynote speakers

# About host projects

## MAR FUND REEF RESCUE INITIATIVE

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MAR Fund is a regional environmental fund, whose mission is to drive funding and partnerships regional for the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of the Mesoamerican Reef.

The Mesoamerican Reef Rescue Initiative (RRI) is one of the programs developed by MAR Fund. RRI's objective is to increase the resilience and recovery capacities of the MAR and the environmental and cultural services it provides through four strategies:

- I. Long-term sustainable funding
- II. Policy and legislation analysis that enable restoration
- III. Capacity-building (support restoration science)
- IV. Economic alternatives

The RRI is a project implemented by MAR Fund in collaboration with the CCAD, thanks to the generous support of the German Cooperation through KfW.

In addition, through RRI, MAR Fund, in collaboration with Willis Towers Watson, carry out the project, The Mesoamerican Reef Insurance Program. This project will complement and support the holistic strategy of the RRI and the sustainability of the Emergency Fund, through the implementation of profitable insurance that allows emergency reef response work after a hurricane in 7 pilot sites of SAM; and thus favor the almost 2 million local beneficiaries that depend on the reef for their protection, food security, and livelihoods.

The Mesoamerican Reef Insurance Program is carried out with the financial contribution of InsuResilience Solutions Fund (ISF) through the Frankfurt School of Finance and Management (FS).





## MAR2R PROJECT OF THE CCAD

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The Integrated Ridge-to-Reef Management of the Mesoamerican Reef Ecoregion Project (MAR2R) is implemented by the CCAD, in coordination with the environmental ministries of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico, funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), through World Wildlife Fund (WWF) as an implementing agency.

The goal of the project is to support the regional collaboration for the integrated ridge-to-reef management of the Mesoamerican Reef ecoregion by showcasing its benefits and improving regional, national, and local capacities for the integrated management and governance of fresh water, coastal, and marine resources.

Through this project, the CCAD seeks to foster the ridge-to-reef approach to strengthening policies, instruments, and landscape restoration actions, blue economy, and the harmonization of discharge standards, in order to obtain comprehensive benefits connected between land and coastal marine areas.

In this context, there are three fields of work in which regional instruments or initiatives are promoted to strengthen the ridge-to-reef approach:

- A ministerial statement that promotes landscape restoration with a ridge-to-reef approach supporting the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the Bonn Challenge, particular national strategies, and specific technical instruments.<sup>2</sup>
- Regional Blue Economy Protocol based on the Roatan Agreements.<sup>3</sup>
- Protocol for the Harmonization of Wastewater Discharge Standards in the Mesoamerican Reef Ecoregion.



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<sup>2</sup> For example, the development of the Manual of Mangrove Restoration in the Caribbean (CCAD-MAR2R-MARFund-UNEP).

<sup>3</sup> Roatan Agreements are some of the key outcomes from the Blue Economy World Summit that took place in Roatan, Honduras, from June 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019, within the frame of COP 15 of the Cartagena Convention and its protocols. An analysis was conducted on the increasing degradation and reduction of coastal marine resources, caused by pollution from land sources, habitat destruction associated with coastal development, overfishing, and climate change. This provided a shift towards inclusive and sustainable economic models, such as sustainable blue economies and economies based on sustainable oceans.

