

MAR+Invest

The Business Development
and Finance Facility
of the Mesoamerican Reef



Photo: Fundación Albatros



FONDO MEXICANO
PARA LA CONSERVACIÓN
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The Mesoamerican Reef region

The Mesoamerican Reef (MAR) coastline stretches for 1,000 kilometers across the coastlines of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. The MAR includes the largest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere and is world renowned for its diverse natural wonders and its rich cultural and ethnic diversity. The interconnected habitats, from ridge to reef, provide food, shelter, breeding areas, migration routes and nursery grounds for a vast array of species, many of which are threatened. Coastal and marine resources include large expanses of mangrove forests and extensive shallow shelves that support some of the healthiest remaining reefs in the Caribbean. Besides shoreline protection, the MAR plays a key role in the livelihoods of the coastal communities who depend on it. However, the region faces several threats such as uncontrolled runoff of nutrients and sediments, lack of sanitation infrastructure, tourism-related coastal development, overfishing and climate change.



The barrier

The annual value of the MAR is US\$ 4.5 billion, integrated by reef-related tourism (US\$ 3.9 B), reef-related fisheries (US\$ 183 M), and shoreline protection (between US\$ 320 and US\$ 438 M).¹ However, much of this value is at risk. If the MAR continues to decline, by 2030 the per annum value of the system could fall by US\$ 3.1 billion a year (in tourism, fisheries and coastal development). Conversely, a shift towards healthy reefs by 2030 could unlock an additional US\$ 2.5 billion annually across the three sectors.²

The absence of a relationship between entrepreneurship ecosystems, conservation and commercial capital in the MAR, is a barrier to the development of commercially viable ventures with a positive impact on the coastal and marine ecosystems. Without these relations, the gap in capital required for conservation and restoration of coral and related ecosystems will not be closed.

1 IDB – WRI. Economic Valuation of the Mesoamerican Reef. <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Economic-Valuation-of-the-Ecosystem-Services-of-the-Mesoamerican-Reef-and-the-Allocation-and-Distribution-of-these-Values.pdf>

2 UN Environment, ISU, ICRI and Trucost 2018. The Coral Reef Economy: The business case for investment in the protection, preservation and enhancement of coral reef health. 36pp

What is the solution offered by MAR+Invest?

MAR+Invest is a blended finance mechanism with strong monitoring and evaluation of impacts, business acceleration and a capacity building program to enable conditions for a sustainable ocean-based economy in the Mesoamerican Reef (MAR). It will invest in market-based initiatives that make a positive contribution to the health and resilience of the coral reef ecosystems and communities of the MAR. This will require raising additional philanthropic capital. The ultimate goal is to unlock private capital for investment in reef conservation in this ecoregion.

The four MAR+Invest partners are: New Ventures & Viwala, Mexican Fund for the Conservation of Nature & Sureste Sostenible, Healthy Reefs Initiative and the Mesoamerican Reef Fund (MAR Fund).



Photo: María José González

Success requires broad collaboration with entrepreneurs, conservation agencies and governments, to develop and finance enterprises that generate both market returns and coral positive outcomes through restoration, protection and/or reduction of threats.

How will MAR+Invest work?

This initiative, supported by the Global Fund for Coral Reefs, will carry out calls for proposals to identify potential market initiatives in different stages of development, with a reef positive end result in the MAR. The first call for proposals will focus on identifying revenue generating interventions in 18 Coastal and Marine Protected Areas (CMPA) previously prioritized in the region.

The inception phase for MAR+Invest will establish the technical assistance facility (MARTAF), managed by MAR Fund, and the Financing Facility, managed by New Ventures and Viwala. These two structures will attract catalytic and commercial capital to the ecoregion to build the resilience of MAR coral reefs via blended finance. The Mexican Fund for the Conservation of Nature and Sureste Sostenible will enable conditions for positive reef innovation, investment and public policy in the four countries in the MAR through a capacity-building program. The Healthy Reefs Initiative will lead the impact evaluation and monitoring throughout the project.

MAR+Invest will identify, incubate, and finance solutions that offer a scale of impact capable of reducing local threats to the reef, generating alternative livelihoods, increasing financial sustainability for CMPAs in the MAR, grow an Emergency Fund managed by MAR Fund, and ultimately attract capital to develop a coral positive investment portfolio.

Are you an investor, an entrepreneur, an interested collaborator or want to know more about this initiative? Please visit www.mar-invest.org or contact us at info@marfund.org