
ICRI REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

2018 - 2021



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ICRI REPORT OF ACTIVITIES 2018 - 2021

The ICRI Secretariat was co-chaired by Australia, Indonesia and Monaco from July 2018 to October 2021. During this time, the co-chairmanship saw the implementation of the ICRI 2018-2020 Plan of Action, which was extended until 2021 due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The Plan was adopted during the 33rd General Meeting in Monaco, in December 2018. The Plan was structured around the following four themes:

- Theme 1 – Promote effective and adaptable solutions to improve the protection of coral reefs
- Theme 2 – Understand the trends of coral reefs
- Theme 3 – Live Reef Food Fish Trade (LRFFT)
- Theme 4 - Help to reduce anthropogenic threats to coral reefs

Together with the ICRI members, the Secretariat sought to implement the actions under each of these themes, while continuing to highlight both the value of coral reef ecosystems and the cumulative threats they are facing.

Key achievements of the Secretariat:

- 15 new members
- Three General Meetings (Monaco in 2018, Australia in 2019, and online in 2021).
- Reinvigoration of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) and release of the Sixth GCRMN Status of Coral Reefs of the World Report
- Adoption of an ICRI Recommendation on coral reefs and related ecosystems within the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.
- Workshops on key topics including:
 - Innovative financing for coral reefs
 - Sustainable tourism
 - Managing to build resilience
 - Reef restoration
 - Achieving coral reef targets
- Major reports published on reef restoration, the Live Reef Food Fish Trade, and noise pollution in coral reefs.
- Successful implementation of the UN Environment & ICRI Small Grants Programme
- Partnerships with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, Community of Ocean Action the Global Fund for Coral Reefs, the World Economic Forum and UpLink.
- Contributions on key topics from the ad hoc Committee on reef restoration, resilience-based management, and post-2020 coral reef target.



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NEW MEMBERS

*During the Secretariat term,
15 new members joined the
Initiative:*

Canada; Germany; Jordan; [New Caledonia](#) (the first overseas territory to join ICRI); [Sri Lanka](#); the [European Union](#); [Coral Restoration Consortium](#); [Coral Triangle Center](#); [Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs Fisheries and Food Security \(CTI-CFF\)](#); [Encounter Edu](#); [Mars Inc.](#); [Mirpuri Foundation](#); [Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium](#); [Vulcan Inc.](#); and [World Underwater Federation \(CMAS\)](#).

ICRI GENERAL MEETINGS

Three general meetings were organized including ICRI's first online meeting.

33rd ICRI General Meeting, Monaco, December 2018



Monaco hosted the **33rd ICRI General Meeting** in December 2018. During this first meeting under the new Secretariat, ICRI members adopted the 2018-2020 (extended to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic) ICRI **Plan of Action**. A one-day workshop on “**innovative funding for coral reefs**” was also organised. In total, 87 delegates from 43 ICRI member countries and organisations attended.

34th ICRI General Meeting, Australia, December 2019



Led by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), Australia hosted the **34th ICRI General Meeting** in December 2019, Townsville, Australia. The meeting marked 25 years since ICRI was first established. During the meeting, a “**Managing for Resilience Workshop**” was held, with the aim of building an understanding of what “managing for resilience” means for coral reefs, sharing leading practice examples of how resilience-based management can be applied and having an open a dialogue about resilience-based management and the tools available for coral reef managers. The meeting was well attended with over 80 delegates.

35th General Meeting, Virtual, February 2021



The **35th ICRI General Meeting** was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in February 2021. It was attended by over 130 delegates from 60 ICRI members who participated in productive discussions and adopted multiple documents, all of which, aided by the

PLAN OF ACTION 2018 - 2021

Theme 1 Promote effective and adaptable solutions to improve the protection of coral reefs

Coral reef ecosystems and the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

In 2018, ICRI established an ad hoc Committee responsible for engaging in the CBD Post-2020 process and work to ensure coral reefs would be appropriately recognised within the Global Biodiversity Framework, that will be adopted by the 15th Conference of the Parties and set the way forwards for biodiversity action through to 2050.

Following extensive engagement and consultation by the ad hoc Committee, ICRI adopted a consensus Recommendation in May 2020, setting out how coral reefs and related ecosystems could be appropriately reflected within the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The Recommendation included four key elements: ensuring that the wording of the goals and targets would provide a suitable entry point to encourage coral reef related actions; that the ambition and timescales of the

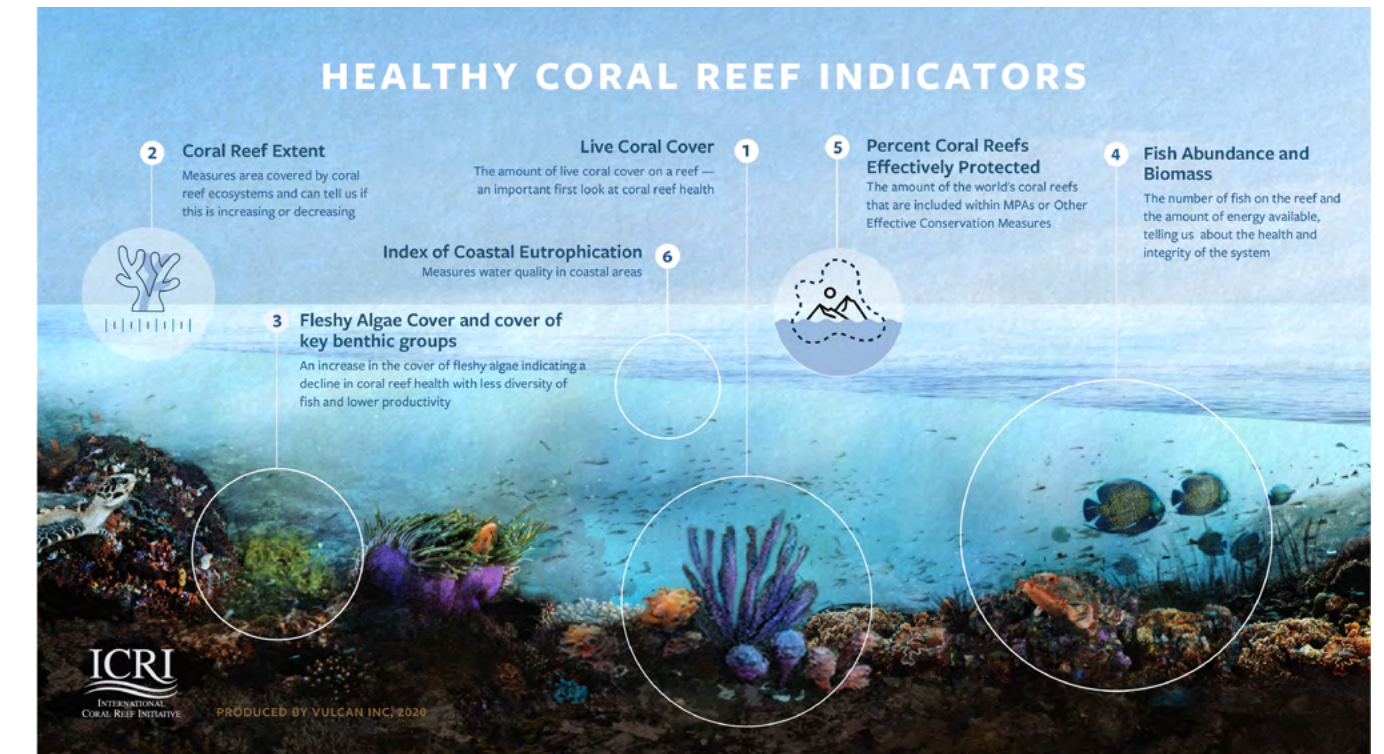


Figure 1: ICRI recommended coral reef indicators developed for inclusion in the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

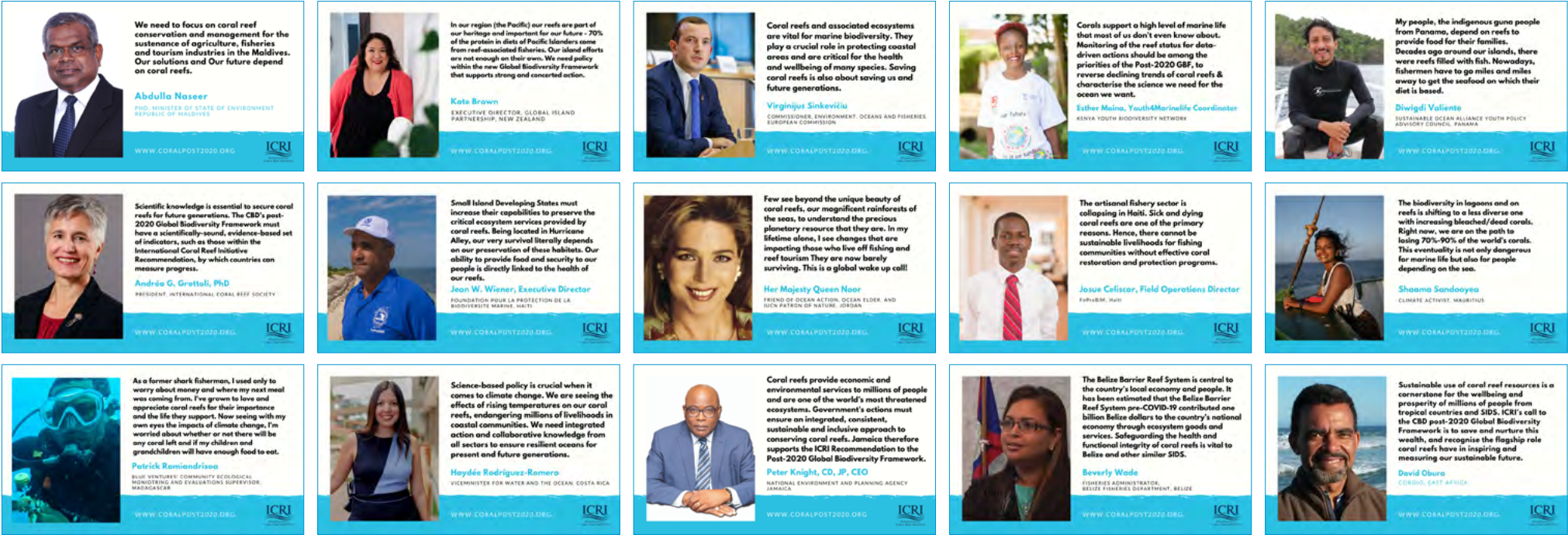
goals and targets were appropriate for coral reef ecosystems; it provided a suite of existing and usable coral reef health indicators to be included in the monitoring framework of the GBF; and to ensure that guidance for the financial mechanism included reference to vulnerable coastal ecosystems.

Since the adoption of the Recommendation the work of the ad hoc Committee has focused engaging with the CBD process through formal submissions, informal dialogues and information exchange with Parties, CBD Secretariat and the wider CBD community, both within and beyond the ICRI membership, to build support for inclusion of these recommended elements. Proposals being put forward by the ad hoc Committee are being taken up

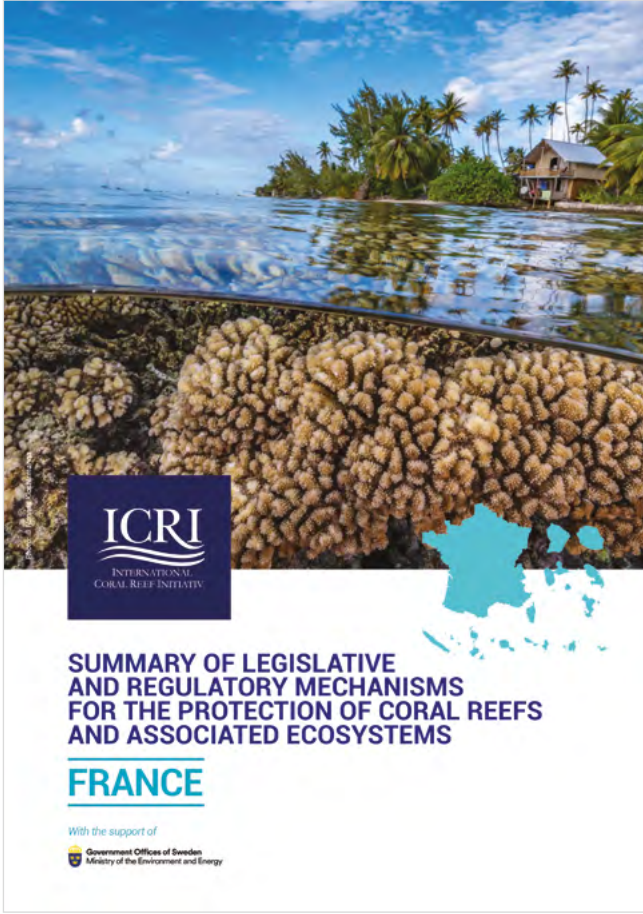
by Parties within the discussions to date, notably, all of the six recommended coral reef indicators are currently included within the draft monitoring framework for the GBF. The ad hoc Committee will continue its engagement to support Parties in final stages of the negotiations.

The six ICRI recommended indicators are presented in Fig. 1. These indicators are already in use, with defined methods, baselines and for most are already deliverable at a national and global scale. A further five indicators are proposed, these are indicators that will be important for measuring progress against the draft goals and targets, in particular relating to ecosystem integrity, but still need further development for broad application. More information is available at www.coralpost2020.org

As a part of the work of the ad hoc Committee, a communication campaign has been implemented in support of the Recommendation. This includes producing visual materials, publishing articles and policy briefs ([see more](#)). Another element has been a social media campaign 'Voices of Support' sharing the voices of governments, scientists, youth, indigenous people and local communities and advocates calling for coral reefs to be recognised within the GBF from across the world. The campaign utilised the hashtag #ForCoral and has collated over 80 voices, communicated through quote cards available [here](#). In addition, new, audiogram quote 'cards' have been developed as well as collaborative effort with The Reef-World Foundation. This campaign will run until the adoption of the GBF at CBD COP 15 in 2022.



Policies related to the protection of coral reefs



The consideration of coral reefs and related ecosystems in national, regional and international policies is an opportunity to ensure their sustainable management and conservation. On this premise, multiple studies were undertaken that aimed to underline good practices in policies related to the protection of coral reefs by providing a summary of



existing legislative and regulatory mechanisms for the protection of coral reefs and related ecosystems at the national level. The good practices were found in country-specific legislation, alongside other means of implementation of several international and regional instruments important for protecting coral reefs. The purpose of the studies was not to assess and evaluate the efficiency of the action of the country, but to highlight the positive elements collected and to identify the potential gaps in implementation. Studies have been finalized for [France](#), [Seychelles](#), [Fiji](#), and Costa Rica.

This work is complementary to the 2019 ICRI/UNEP study on "[Analysis of global and regional policy instruments and governance mechanisms related to the protection and sustainable management of coral reefs](#)".



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Financing Coral Reefs

INNOVATIVE FINANCE FOR CORAL REEFS, MONACO, DECEMBER 2018

The [Workshop on Innovative Finance for Coral Reefs](#), held December 2018 at the 33rd GM, aimed to provide an overview of opportunities and approaches for financing marine conservation with a focus on coral reefs and related ecosystems, enabling factors for the development of conservation finance mechanisms, and key steps for their establishment.

The workshop included presentations and panel discussions on effective and innovative solutions followed by a hands-on exercise to prioritize and develop innovative finance solutions. The one-day workshop was targeted towards conservation practitioners, professionals, planners and policy makers from governmental and intergovernmental agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector and academia eager to understand and discuss finance tools and solutions for effective management of marine and coastal environments.

FINANCE TOOLS FOR CORAL REEF CONSERVATION

A training 'deck', consisting of [13 presentations](#), to provide an introductory overview on finance mechanisms to protected area managers, government employees, conservation biologists and NGO staff has been produced by the Conservation Finance Alliance. The training deck is based on "[Finance Tools for Coral Reef Conservation: A Guide](#)" 2018. The slide decks cover [finance tools and mechanisms](#) along with an introductory context-setting section. Each resource can be used independently, applied as an entire set, or in any combination to meet the requirements of the protected area.



CONTRIBUTION TO "CORAL REEF ECONOMY" REPORT

[This study](#) presents new analysis of the value, costs and benefits of the coral reef economy to highlight that shifting the trajectory of coral reef health from one of continuing decline towards a healthy state could unlock tens of billions of dollars in additional value. The findings show that this shift can be largely achieved through strategic interventions using available tools and methods, indicating that the goal of closing the gap between the forecast benefits of a healthy reef and the current trend towards coral reef degradation is within our reach.

Reef Restoration

Over the last 3 years, ICRI has worked intensively on reef restoration, and mainly through its ad hoc committee on reef restoration. In addition to updating the 2005 ICRI resolution on artificial coral reef restoration and rehabilitation, several products were produced:

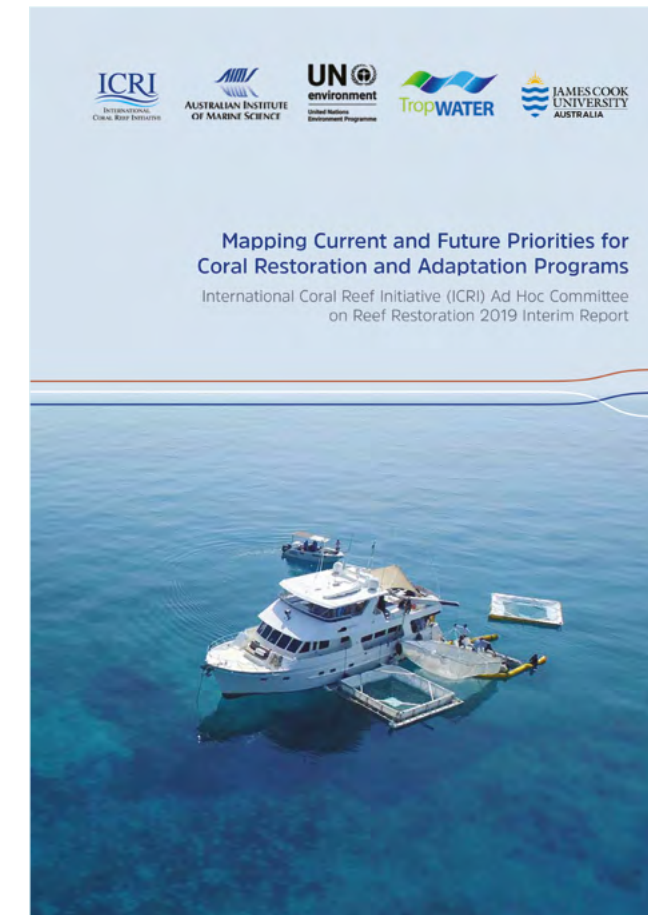


THE CORAL REEF RESTORATION AS A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE ECOSYSTEM SERVICES: A GUIDE TO CORAL RESTORATION METHODS (Hein et al. 2020)

was the first official report for the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration. It presents an overview of the best-available knowledge in the field and provides realistic recommendations for the use of restoration as a management strategy for coral reefs to assist managers, practitioners, policy makers, and funding agencies to make informed decisions. While not designed to reduce climate impacts, coral reef restoration can be a useful tool to support resilience, especially at local scales where coral recruitment is limited, and disturbances can be mitigated. Ongoing investment in coral reef restoration research and development globally will improve the scale and cost-efficiency of the methods currently applied.

'MAPPING CURRENT AND FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR CORAL RESTORATION AND ADAPTATION PROGRAMS'

(McLeod et al. 2019) was the main report from the ad hoc committee in 2019. An online survey was distributed to ICRI members and supplemented with expert knowledge. Most ICRI countries were using coral restoration as a tool to manage their reefs. The most commonly used techniques were coral gardening and direct transplantation, followed by artificial structures. The most common objectives were engaging local communities and supporting tourism and fisheries production. ICRI members also highlighted the importance of research into coral adaptation or climate protection. Almost all ICRI country-members stated that new policy relevant to restoration was needed.



THE CORAL RESTORATION DATABASE is now being hosted on the ICRI Forum it was previously hosted by the team at James Cook University who developed the Database after synthesising the available knowledge of coral restoration methods in a review paper (published January 2020), incorporating data from the peer-reviewed scientific literature, complemented with grey literature and a survey of coral restoration practitioners.

MAPPING THE GLOBAL FUNDING LANDSCAPE FOR CORAL REEF RESTORATION (HEIN ET AL., 2021).

In 2019, a report from the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) 's Ad-hoc committee on coral restoration revealed that most ICRI countries are now using coral restoration as tool to conserve and protect coral reefs. That same report also identified funding and political will as major driving forces of restoration implementation.

A desktop analysis identified 61 potential funders and an online survey gathered perspectives and funding information from 137 coral reef restoration managers and practitioners. The study found that 1) funding for coral reef restoration has been dominated by government grants and investments from the private sector, 2) there are regional differences in funding which highlight disparities between developed and less developed nations, and 3) timeline of funding are dominated by short-term grants which are often inadequate to support long-term coral reef restoration efforts.

Resilience-based Management

The ad hoc Committee on resilience-based management was formed as an outcome of the 'Managing for Resilience' workshop held during the 34th ICRI General Meeting in Australia, 2019. The committee has focussed on building awareness and understanding of RBM and its benefits through development of a [Resilience-Hub](#) page on the ICRI Forum website. The committee is preparing a policy brief and accompanying video to help de-mystify RBM and get the commitment of policy makers.



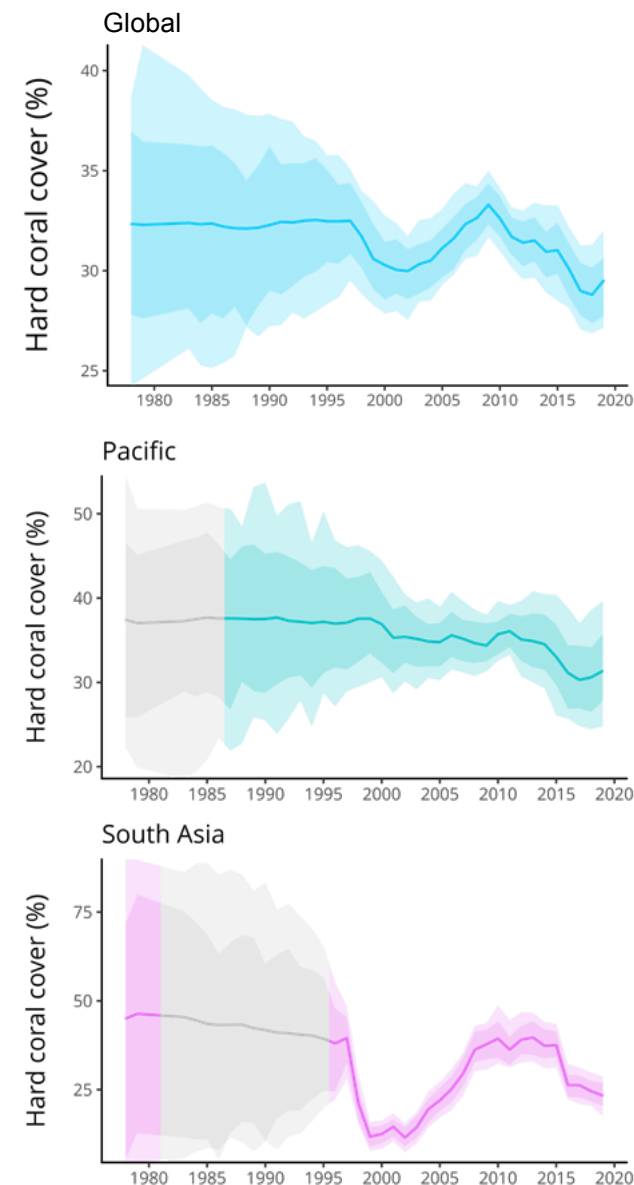
Theme 2 Understand the trends of coral reefs

The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), reinvigorated at the 33rd General Meeting, Monaco, released the Sixth GCRMN Status of Coral Reefs of the World Executive Summary in September 2021 at the IUCN World Conservation Congress. The full report was subsequently launched following the ICRI Handover Ceremony, 5th October 2021.

The report, a culmination of work by over 300 authors and contributors, is the first since 2008, and the first based on the quantitative analysis of a global dataset. The dataset spans over >40 years, from 1978-2019, and is comprised of almost 2 million observation from over 12,000 sites in 73 reef-bearing countries.

Overall, the report highlights that prior to the 1998 mass bleaching event, global average of coral cover was relatively stable and high at >30%. This event resulted in the death of 8% of the world's corals and a subsequent decrease in overall cover by 14% from 2009 – 2018. Recover has been observed; however, this constitutes to 2% of that that was previously lost.

During this timeframe, algal cover has increased by approximately 20%, reflecting a change in reef composition.

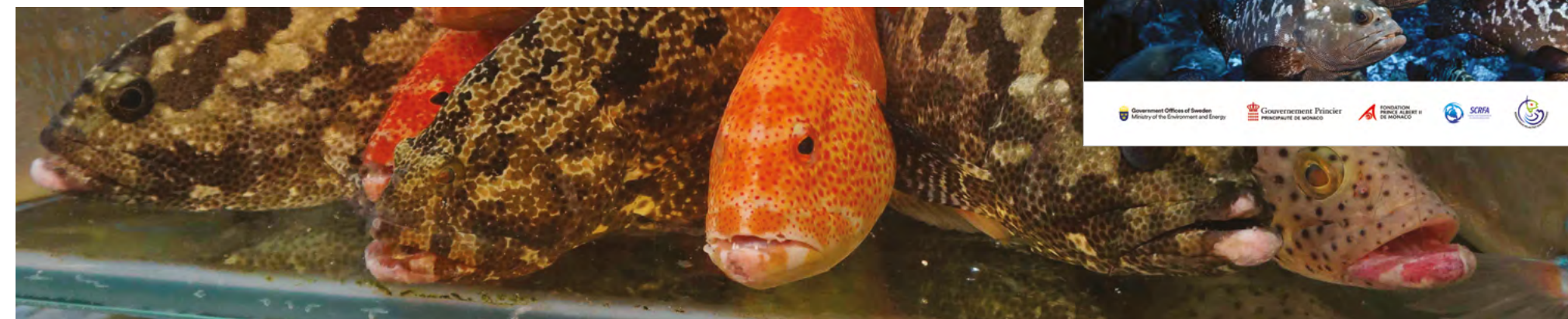


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Theme 3 Live Reef Food Fish Trade (LRFFT)

The culmination of this theme was the production of a report, "[Live Reef Food Fish Trade: Undervalued, Overfished and Opportunities for Change](#)", that focused on Groupers and the wild capture fishery aspect of the LRFFT, accounting for almost all species within the trade. The report, authored by Yvonne Sadovy De Mithceson, presents five key highlights:

1. Improve government understanding, oversight and control of coral reef fisheries and trade to within biologically sustainable levels. A Coral Reef Fishery Management Plan could focus primarily on longer-term benefits of fishery resources to coastal fisher communities, for food and livelihoods.
2. Establish clear operational, regulatory and administrative distinctions between hatchery-based mariculture and wild capture fisheries in terms of objectives and management and specifically recognize juvenile capture as a wild capture fishery.
3. Reduce/eliminate illegal, unregulated and unmonitored fishing and trade by better monitoring and controlling exports conducted at airports, the use of cyanide and particularly the activities of foreign vessels. Ensure that export values and volumes are correctly reported.
4. Ensure protection of spawning biomass of key target/threatened species by safeguarding juveniles (minimum sizes) and/or managing juvenile fisheries (e.g. for grow-out). Spawning aggregation management will be necessary for some species, and all threatened species need better protection.
5. Develop certification and/or traceability systems by establishing closer links with consumer centres and analysing trade chains. Consider the introduction of export duties/tariffs for luxury seafood. Value chain analysis would help to identify opportunities to retain value in-country.



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Theme 4

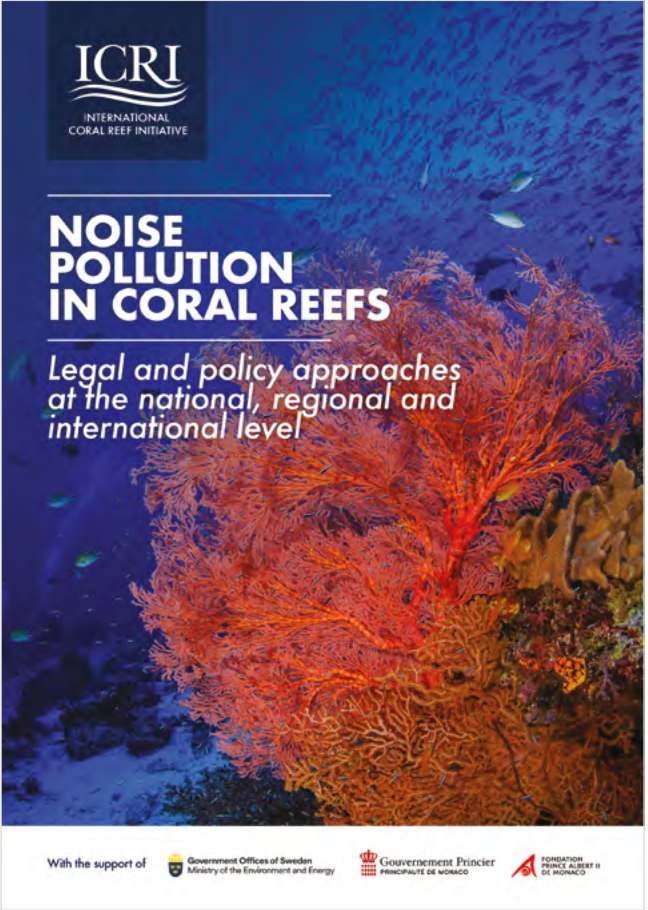
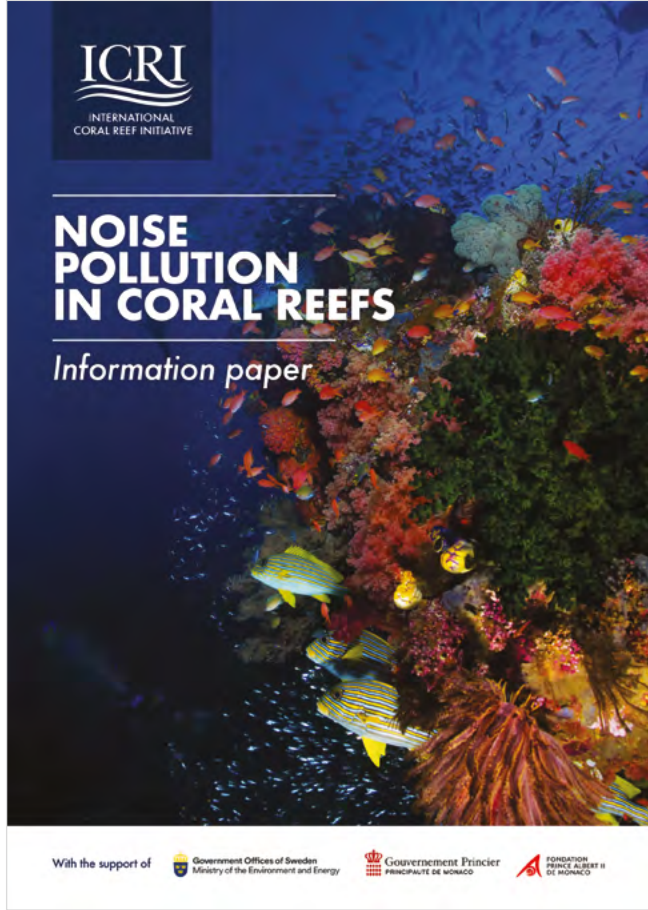
Help to reduce anthropogenic threats to coral reefs

Under theme 4 of the 2018 – 2021 Plan of Action, ICRI's desired outcome by 2020 was for anthropogenic threats to reefs highlighted by ICRI and information is made available for members on actions that can be taken to reduce threats. To

achieve this desired outcome, two studies were undertaken, an information paper and legal and policy approaches at the national, regional and international level concerning noise pollution on coral reefs.

NOISE POLLUTION IN CORAL REEFS - INFORMATION PAPER: 2020.
The information paper contextualises natural noise on coral reefs in comparison to anthropogenic noise, while discussing how coral reefs are affected by noise and how to tackle such pollution through policy approaches.

NOISE POLLUTION IN CORAL REEFS – LEGAL AND POLICY APPROACHES AT THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL: 2020.
Anthropogenic noise in the marine environment derives from a multitude of sources. Appropriate legal response is needed to mitigate the underwater noise pollution resulting from those activities at the national, regional, and international levels. Examples of such policies are developed and presented in [the paper](#), showing the diversity of lever available to address underwater noise pollution.



PARTNERSHIPS

UNEP/ICRI Small Grants Programme

The small grants programme is supported by the US Department of State, the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and ICRI launched a small grants programme to support the conservation and restoration of coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass. This joint initiative builds on the success of the [first small grants programme in 2017](#). Over 400 applications were received, and 8 partners in 7 countries were funded:



The Earthshot Prize (TEP)

ICRI has been nominated as official Nominator for the [Earthshot Prize](#). The prize is centred around five 'Earthshots' – simple but ambitious goals for our planet which if achieved by 2030 will improve life for us all, for generations to come. Each Earthshot is underpinned by scientifically agreed targets including the UN Sustainable Development Goals and other internationally recognised measures to help repair our planet.

Uplink

In 2020, ICRI partnered with the [World Economic Forum](#) and UpLink – a digital platform to crowdsource innovations to accelerate the SDGs – to launch the second Ocean Solutions Sprint calling for solutions to restore, protect and invest in the ocean. The “coral” solution winners were:

- [CHARM](#), the innovative coral farming robot, combines scientific research with computer automation to reduce costs, save time, and grow resilient coral colonies at economies of scale.
- [Plant a Million Corals](#) and their adaptable, low-cost coral restoration units, can be deployed to not only increase coral growth but also to empower communities to take an active role in conservation.

Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR)

[The Global Fund for Coral Reefs](#) is the only blended finance instrument dedicated to mobilising action and resources for the protection and restoration of coral reef ecosystems globally. Launched in September 2020 on the side lines of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly by a coalition of partners convening to mobilise public and private resources, the GFCR aims to close the coral reef funding gap and accelerate resilience-based interventions. ICRI has been invited to the Fund's Executive Board Meetings as a Strategic Partner.

The Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform

To complement and collaborate with existing efforts of relevant national, regional, and international initiatives, including ICRI, the G20 launched a Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform. The platform is an innovative initiative aimed at delivering solutions for coral reef managers to implement conservation, resilience, adaptation, and restoration actions. ICRI was part of the founding committee and is now on the Initiative Governing Committee as a Supporting Member.

Community of Ocean Action

As a follow-up on outcomes of the UN Ocean Conference (held in June 2017), the United Nations launched nine thematic multi-stakeholder “Communities of Ocean Action”, one of which is focused on 'Coral Reefs'. This Community of Ocean Action, co-facilitated by ICRI and UNEP, aims to support its members in implementing their coral reef-related voluntary commitments by exchanging progress reports, experiences, lessons learned and good practices.

As of September 2021, over 159 voluntary commitments related to coral reefs have been made. These include activities aimed at their protection, management and restoration, as well as maintaining tangible benefits to coastal communities from coral reef fisheries and tourism. The commitments cover both local and global initiatives.

UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration



ICRI is an official supporting partner of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. In this role, ICRI will help promote and amplify the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and its activities while highlighting coral reefs and associated ecosystems. ICRI will identify synergies and complementary actions between the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the ad-hoc committees, including reef restoration, resilience-based management and post-2020 coral reef target, advocating for the strong representation and consideration of coral reefs, and associated ecosystems.

In support of the launch of the decade, ICRI hosted an online event entitled “Restoring coral reefs: Guidelines, Best Practice, and Success Stories” which was attended by over 300 participants and received over 800 registrations. The event was moderated by NOAA's coral reef conservation program director, Dr Jennifer Koss. A recording of the event can be found [here](#).

ICRI has further nominated multiple ICRI-associated projects to showcase restoration efforts as part of the decade. This includes the Commonwealth Blue Charted organisation, Fragments of Hope, Belize and MARS.

EVENTS ORGANIZED



Photo: ©Alexis Rosenfeld

Several events were organised throughout the Secretariat term to promote the work of ICRI and also to raise awareness on the importance of coral reefs, their socio-economic values and the threats they are facing:

- [SIXTH GCRMN STATUS OF CORAL REEFS OF THE WORLD: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY EVENT – 7TH SEPTEMBER 2021](#)
- [RESTORING CORAL REEFS: GUIDELINES, BEST PRACTICE & SUCCESS STORIES – 2ND JUNE 2021](#)

- [CORAL REEFS EVENT AT THE MONACO OCEAN WEEK 2021 – 25TH MARCH 2021](#)
- [ICRI, AN INITIATIVE TO ACHIEVE INTERNATIONALLY AGREED CORAL REEF TARGETS – 26TH MARCH 2019](#)
- [PRESENTING FOR PROTECTION: ELICITING BEHAVIOUR CHANGE IN VISITORS TO WORLD HERITAGE AREAS - 29TH NOVEMBER 2018](#)
- [HIGH-LEVEL SIDE-EVENT ON “THE FUTURE OF CORAL REEFS IN A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY” – 29TH OCTOBER 2018](#)

COMMUNICATION

A New ICRI Forum Website

In March 2020, ICRI launched its newly designed website, funded by the Government of Australia. The website provides a more accessible platform to engage with ICRI members, critical international stakeholders and countries within the coral reef landscape. The website provides member profiles with focal point contact information to facilitate engagement and networking.

It is also home to large amount of resources developed by ICRI ad-hoc committees, working groups and members alongside multiple 'hubs' such as the Restoration Hub that also houses the Coral Restoration Database.

The Global Socioeconomic Monitoring Initiative for Coastal Management

In May 2021, the [Global Socioeconomic Monitoring Initiative for Coastal Management \(SOCMON\)](#) was integrated into the ICRIForum website. The SOCMON website provides an introduction and history of SOCMON accompanied by key resources and an intuitive resource library that enables users to sort resources by country, region and/or year.

Documents adopted

The following documents were adopted during the meeting:

1. [Resolution to extend the ICRI Ad Hoc Committee on Resilience-based Management](#)
2. [Resolution to extend the ICRI Ad Hoc Committee on coral reef restoration and adaptation research and development](#)
3. [Resolution to extend the ICRI Ad Hoc Committee on the inclusion of a coral reef-related target in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#)
4. [Resolution to update the 2005 ICRI resolution on artificial coral reef restoration and rehabilitation](#)
5. [Resolution to extend the ICRI ad hoc committee on coral reef restoration and adaptation research and development](#)

6. [Resolution for the Inclusion of a coral reef-related target in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#)
7. [Recommendation to address the decline of herbivorous fish populations for improved coral community health throughout the Tropical Eastern Pacific, the Eastern and Western Atlantic, and the Greater Caribbean Region](#)
8. [Resolution to support the global fund for coral reefs](#)
9. [Terms of Reference for the ad hoc committee on resilience-based management](#)
10. [The resolution on the revision of the ICRI organisation and management procedures](#)
11. [The resolution on the 6th International Tropical Marine Ecosystems Management Symposium](#)



THE FUTURE

On October 5th 2021, the ICRI co-chairs of Australia, Indonesia and Monaco will hand over the ICRI Secretariat to the United States of America following a highly productive three years implementing the Plan of Action 2018-2021. The United States of America, a founding member, will chair the ICRI Secretariat for the third time.

Partners



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