The Commonwealth Blue Charter: Collaboration Towards Protection and Restoration of Coral Reefs

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The Commonwealth and the Ocean

- 56 Countries
- 49 have a marine coastline
- 1/3 of world’s marine waters within national jurisdiction

37 Commonwealth member countries have 45% of world’s coral reefs

Australia and Belize host the world’s two largest barrier reefs

8 of 20 world’s largest marine protected areas are in Commonwealth waters

Marae Moana The Cook Islands: World’s largest designated marine managed area

World’s 1st agreement was signed between Mauritius and Seychelles to co-manage their shared outer continental shelf.

Saya de Malha Bank: (included in this agreement) hosts the world’s largest offshore seagrass meadow.
Commonwealth Blue Charter

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2018
Blue Charter Champions and Action Groups

- Coral reef protection and restoration: Australia, Belize and Mauritius
- Mangrove ecosystems and livelihoods: Sri Lanka
- Marine plastic pollution (CCOA): United Kingdom and Vanuatu
- Ocean and climate change: Fiji
- Ocean acidification: New Zealand
- Marine protected areas: Barbados and Seychelles
- Ocean observations: Canada
- Sustainable aquaculture: Cyprus
- Sustainable blue economy: Antigua and Barbuda and Kenya
- Sustainable coastal fisheries: Kiribati and Maldives

The Commonwealth Blue Charter
Coral Reef Protection & Restoration Action Group

- Co-Championed by Australia, Belize & Mauritius
- 11 member countries
- 10 out of 20 countries with largest coral reef area in the Commonwealth
- Knowledge sharing, cooperation, best practices

Overarching Goal for Coral Reef Ecosystems
Improved outlook for the health, sustainability and functionality of coral reef ecosystems, which in turn can maintain and enhance livelihood opportunities.

Partnerships:
Commonwealth Blue Charter Project Incubator

GOAL: Assisting governments transition to ocean sustainability, through the development and support of equitable, climate-resilient pilot projects.

- 47 applications
- 7 projects from 6 countries currently supported
- Covering climate, corals, mangroves, blue carbon, coastal fisheries, plastic and nutrient pollution
Building ocean climate monitoring capacity for youth and leaders on the Swahili Coast

• Partners: Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI)

• Phase 1: Identify and establish marine conservation leaders in three distinct regions

• Phase 2: Co-design marine mapping and coral reef monitoring.

• The project is targeted at empowering local communities and promoting long-term capacity-building

• Commonwealth grant award £50,000
Rapid Assessment Projects

• Ocean climate rapid risk assessment (Rapid CORVI)
  • 5 countries, 7 months (completed)
  • Barbados, Dominica, Kiribati, Mauritius, Sri Lanka
  • Partners: Stimson, ORRAA

• Blue economy transition readiness rapid assessment
  • 2 countries, 5 months
  • Antigua & Barbuda, Trinidad & Tobago
  • Partners: UNEP, HMC

➢ Pilot methodology
➢ Assists national prioritisation
➢ Fast and scalable
Partnership with the Allen Coral Atlas

The Allen Coral Atlas provides the first regularly updated 3.7-meter resolution satellite images of the world’s coral reefs. With the Atlas, coral conservationists, reef managers and scientists have access to information that has never before been available at this scale.

Learn more at www.allencoralatlas.org
**Fiji**

WWF Fiji expedition to Great Sea Reef using the Atlas for MPA implementation, reef status assessment and to inform regional marine spatial planning.

**Vanuatu**

Researchers working with the Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation are using Atlas data to feed into country-wide marine spatial plans.

**Sri Lanka**

Designation of the Kayankerni Reef area as a National Park based on Allen Coral Atlas habitat data.
Case study 1: Reef restoration in Belize

- Laughing Bird Caye National Park – World Heritage Area
- *Acropora* decline: hurricanes, bleaching, white-band disease
- Fragmentation approach – select for heat resistance
- 82,879 nursery-grown corals outplanted
- 10-20% annual coral cover increases *without adding more corals*.
- > 1 ha of shallow degraded reef replenished.
- 89% survival of the outplanted individuals after 13 years.
- Now 23 *in situ* coral nurseries throughout Belize
- Training curriculum & manual developed for coastal community.
- Lessons: involve local community – build expertise – protect grazers and control fishing (no-take zones) – avoid hurricane/bleaching season
Case study 2: Master Reef Guide program, Australia

- Great Barrier Reef – World Heritage Area – 65,000 tourism jobs
- Healthy reef = healthy industry
- First-of-kind program for coral reefs.
- Provides industry and government recognized qualification to build capacity of tourism staff.
- Master Reef Guides need to pass a comprehensive selection procedure and training process.
- 3 cohorts of Master Reef Guides trained in 2018/19.
One Resilient Common Future:
Transforming our Common Wealth

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