

## Steering Committee Meeting

8<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Hosted as part of the 38<sup>th</sup> ICRI General Meeting

[Crowne Plaza Jeddah Al Salam](#), Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Please refer to the GCRMN Steering Committee logistical note for further information on meeting location and accommodation. For information on the ICRI 38<sup>th</sup> General meeting, including accommodation and booking links, please visit: <https://icriforum.org/events/icrigm38/>

Lunch and Coffee Breaks will be provided. Attendees are provided in **Annex 1**.

### Agenda (07/09/2024)

Time (GMT +3)	Agenda Item	Speaker
09:00	<b>Opening session</b>	Jennifer Koss, <i>Chair</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Welcome from the Chair</li> <li>● Introductions</li> <li>● Purpose of the meeting</li> </ul>	Britta Schaffelke, <i>Global Coordinator</i>
	<b>Welcome from the host</b>	
09:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● General Organization for Conservation of Coral Reefs and Turtles in the Red Sea (SHAMS) (5')</li> </ul>	Dr Abdulaziz Alsuwailem, <i>Chief Conservation &amp; Strategy Officer, SHAMS</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>The SHAMS' Outlook Report: Coral Reefs in the Red Sea, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</b> (15')                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Questions (5')</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Dr Mohammed Ismail, <i>General Director of Coral Reef Monitoring and Assessment, SHAMS</i>
10:00	<b>General update</b>	Britta Schaffelke, <i>Global Coordinator</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Activities</li> <li>● Review of action items</li> </ul>	
10:30	<i>Morning coffee break</i>	
11:00	<b>Regional Network updates</b>	
	<i>10 minutes verbal update with 5 mins for discussion for each region. Further regional updates are available in Annex 2.</i>	
11:00	<b>Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA)</b> <i>General update</i>	Maher Amer, <i>PERSGA</i>
11:15	<b>Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) Sea Area</b> <i>General update</i>	John Burt, <i>New York University Abu Dhabi</i>

11:30	<p><b>Pacific</b>  <i>General update with focus on regional report</i></p>	<p>Nicolas Rocle, <i>SPREP</i>            Jeremy Wicquart, <i>GCRMN</i></p>
11:45	<p><b>Caribbean</b>  <i>General update with focus on regional report</i></p>	<p>Susana Perera Valderrama,  <i>UNEP Cartagena Convention Secretariat</i></p>
12:00	<p><b>Update from the GCRMN Data Taskforce</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collation for 2025 global report</li> <li>• Data analysis for 2025 global report</li> <li>• Upcoming Taskforce activities</li> </ul>	<p>Erica Towle, <i>Co-chair, Data Taskforce</i>            Jérémy Wicquart, <i>Co-chair, Data Taskforce</i>            Tom Dallison, <i>ICRI Secretariat</i></p>
12:30	<i>Lunch</i>	
13:30	<p><b>Workshopping the progression of the next Global Report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production team, timeline</li> <li>• Structure and scope</li> <li>• Regional chapter template</li> <li>• Case studies</li> </ul>	<p>Britta Schaffelke, <i>Global Coordinator</i></p>
15:30	<i>Afternoon coffee break</i>	
16:00	<p><b>General discussion and other business</b>            Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the GFCR and MERMAID are supporting the GCRMN (10')</li> </ul>	<p>Britta Schaffelke, <i>Global Coordinator</i>            Gabriel Grimsditch, <i>UNEP / GFCR</i>, Alexandra Kler Lago, <i>MERMAID / WCS</i></p>
16:45	<p><b>Closing session</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting summary and action items</li> <li>• Closing remarks</li> </ul>	<p>Britta Schaffelke, <i>Global Coordinator</i>            Jennifer Koss, <i>Chair</i>            Dr Abdulaziz Alsuwailem, <i>Chief Conservation &amp; Strategy Officer, SHAMS</i></p>
17:00	<b>Meeting Close</b>	

## Annex 1: Attendees

(Updated 04/09/2024)

Name	Representation	Organisation
Jennifer Koss	ICRI Host & SC Chair - USA	NOAA
Erica Towle *	GCRMN Data Taskforce Co-Chair	NOAA
Francis Staub	ICRI Secretariat	
Tom Dallison	ICRI Secretariat	
Britta Schaffelke	GCRMN Host & Global Coordinator	AIMS
Amanda Brigdale	GCRMN Host	AIMS
Jérémy Wicquart	GCRMN Data Taskforce Co-Chair	Marepolis
Gabriel Grimsditch	UNEP / GFCR	UNEP
Karin Moejes	Western Indian Ocean	CORDIO
Swaleh Aboud	Western Indian Ocean	CORDIO
Nicolas Rocle	Pacific	SPREP
Huang Danwei	East Asia	National University of Singapore
Yuko Kitano	East Asia	Japan Wildlife Research Center
Susana Perera Valderrama	Caribbean	UNEP Cartagena Convention Secretariat
Alexandra Kler Lago	Wildlife Conservation Society	Wildlife Conservation Society
Anderson Mayfield	CORDAP	CORDAP
Observer		
Abdulaziz Alsuwailem	Meeting Host – Saudi Arabia	SHAMS
Mohammed Ismail	Meeting Host – Saudi Arabia	SHAMS
Chico Birrell	Meeting Host – Saudi Arabia	SHAMS
Rokeya Khaton	South Asia	South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)
Priyankari Alexander	South Asia	South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)
Frank Griffin		Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security (CTI-CFF)
Maher Amer	PERSGA	PERSGA
John Burt	ROPME	New York University Abu Dhabi
Ena Lucía Suárez Bolaños	Red List of Ecosystems	IUCN
Michael Lameier	ICRI Host - USA	NOAA
Anna Rothstein	ICRI Host - USA	NOAA
Caroline Donovan	ICRI Host - USA	NOAA
Didier Zoccola	Centre Scientifique de Monaco	Centre Scientifique de Monaco
Apologies		
Serge Planes	Pacific	CRIOBE
Tadashi Kimura	East Asia	Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC)
Karenne Tun	East Asia	Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC)
Beatrice Padovani Ferreira *	Brazil	Federal University of Pernambuco
Melanie McField *	Caribbean	CARIB Steering Committee
Auriane Petit *	Caribbean	SPAW-RAC
Emily Darling	Wildlife Conservation Society	Wildlife Conservation Society



**Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network**  
**An operational network of ICRI hosted by the Australian Institute of Marine Science**

[www.gcrmn.net](http://www.gcrmn.net)

Rory Jordan	CORDAP	CORDAP
Antoine Pebayle *	France	
Jane Hawkrige *	UK	JNCC
Bryony Meakins *	UK	JNCC

\* *requested online attendance.*



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## ANNEX 2: GCRMN Regional Updates 2024

# GCRMN Regional Node update

GCRMN Steering Committee Meeting, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

8<sup>th</sup> September 2024

*Hosted at the 38<sup>th</sup> International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) General Meeting, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia*

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# Australia

## Node coordinator(s):

Acting node coordinator:  
Britta Schaffelke, Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS)

## Node Governance:

Not an active regional node in the strict sense.

Data across Australian reefs are collected, analysed and reported for various purposes, including for the production of regular condition reports. There are a number of long-term monitoring programs conducted by various agencies. There are also active citizen science organisations conducting coral reef monitoring at many locations. These have been approached to contribute data for the forthcoming GCRMN global status report (ReefCheck, Reef Life Survey).

Websites (URL):

- <https://apps.aims.gov.au/reef-monitoring/reefs>
- <https://www.aims.gov.au/research-topics/monitoring-and-discovery/monitoring-great-barrier-reef/reef-reports-hub>
- <https://research.csiro.au/ningaloo/outlook/>
- <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/science/our-programs/marine-science-program>
- <https://reefknowledgesystem.gbrmpa.gov.au/>
- <https://parksaustralia.gov.au/marine/parks/>
- <https://reeflifesurvey.com/>
- <https://www.reefcheckaustralia.org/>

## Short activity update

A main activity was a workshop in May 2024 that initiated the discussion of interest of the main Australian coral reef monitoring practitioners to form an active GCRMN Australia node. Main actions from this workshop are:

- Identify the core group of people interested in actively contributing to develop a GCRMN AUS node, for example local lead/s for each of the 5 GCRMN sub-regions (GBR, NW-AUS, Coral Sea, Christmas & Cocos Keeling, Lord Howe & Norfolk Is reefs)
- Identify (at least interim) coordinators(s) for the GCRMN AUS node (note, most GCRMN regions have 2 co-coordinators)
- Contribute data to the upcoming *GCRMN Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025* report.
- Interested data contributors to form an authorship team for the AUS region chapter of that report
- A follow-up workshop/meeting later in 2025 to develop a community of practice as a first step to forming an active GCRMN AUS node.

In August 2024, the regular Long-Term Monitoring Program [Annual Summary Report of Coral Reef Condition 2023/24](#) was released by AIMS. Also featured on the GCRMN website <https://gcrmn.net/2024/08/20/aims-gbr-report-23-24/> and in an additional explainer article in the Conversation: <https://theconversation.com/high-coral-cover-amid-intense-heatwaves-and-bleaching-heres-how-both-can-be-true-on-the-great-barrier-reef-235510>

The Great Barrier Reef Social and Economic Long-Term Monitoring Program (SELTMP) also had their latest output featured on the GCRMN website: <https://gcrmn.net/2024/07/26/human-dimensions-gbr/>

## Forecast of upcoming node events

- *Please list any major GCRMN-associated events in your region including regional workshops*

Facilitating data collation across the Australian coral reef monitoring providers

# Brazil

## Node coordinator(s):

*Please provide name(s), titles, affiliations and contact email address(es) of current node coordinators.*

**Beatrice Padovani Ferreira, PhD., full professor at Federal University of Pernambuco**

**Ana LÍdia Bertoldi Gaspar, PhD., Consultant at the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change**

## Node Governance

*Please provide a brief overview of your nodes governance in terms of operations, functioning and key stakeholders.*

The coordination of the node will be managed by the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, specifically through its Department of Ocean and Coastal Management, and by the Federal University of Pernambuco, via its Department of Oceanography. This coordination will occur in close collaboration with the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation, which serves as the focal point for the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) and is responsible for the integration with the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) and the International Long-Term Ecological Research (ILTER) Network.

## Short activity update

- *Please list recent GCRMN-related activities, and relevant outputs (incl. URLs if they are shareable), etc. from your node. Please provide updates to cover the period since the recent regional node meeting in February 2024.*



Recently, a survey was conducted to collect information and map all existing coral reef monitoring initiatives, including those involving research agencies, universities, and NGOs. Few meetings have taken place with representatives to structure the node. Currently, the node is being organized, and a local steering committee will be formed to guide the report. This node was recently established under the new government, and the 2020 report marked the first instance of Brazil being represented as a standalone node.

We have participated in all ICRI meetings/webinars last year and this year. Brazil even presented a report at the webinar on “The Status of the Fourth Global Bleaching Event and the role of the global coral reef community”, as part of ICRI’s For Coral Webinar Series held on 14th May 2024

### **The Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025 report**

- *Tom and Jeremy are currently undertaking the data collation process for the next GCRMN Global Report. Meetings have been held with regional coordinators and the process on going. Do you need additional support for the collation and submission of coral reef data to the next Global Report?*
- *Do you have any comments or additional questions on the process being undertaken?*

The node is currently engaged in mapping initiatives and databases, while also informing data contributors of the procedures and encouraging them to establish contact and share their information. This initial mapping is crucial due to the node's recent establishment, as it will help organize and strengthen the node, preparing it for future contributions.

To date, ten initiatives have been mapped, covering a range from local to regional (national) levels. The longer time series, ranging from 10 to 20 years correspond to Long-Term Ecological Research (ILTER) sites in Abrolhos, the Northeast Coast, and oceanic islands, as well as the National Monitoring Program/Reef Check. Public institutions, universities, and NGOs manage ongoing programs that involve citizen science and community engagement. The quality of the data varies from levels 1 to 3, and most of it is not yet publicly available. Some networks and programs are quite recent, and one of the objectives of the node is to promote and support networking and data sharing.

### **Forecast of upcoming node events**

- *Please list any major GCRMN-associated events in your region including regional workshops*

Preparatory Meeting for the 2nd Cycle of the National Action Plan for Coral Reef Conservation - PAN Corais, from September 23 to 26, 2024.

# Caribbean

## Node coordinator(s):

*Please provide name(s), titles, affiliations and contact email address(es) of current node coordinators.*

**Auriane Petit** Marine Ecosystem Project officer – SPAW-RAC

**Melanie McField** – Founder and director - HRI

**Susana Perera Valderrama** Programme Management Officer – UNEP-CEP

## Node Governance

*Please provide a brief overview of your nodes governance in terms of operations, functioning and key stakeholders.*

The GCRMN-Caribbean is led by a Steering Committee (SC) composed of fifteen regional experts, assisted by members-at-large. The members of the SC represent a variety of technical, scientific, and policy expertise. They include both institutional and individual representation.

The SC is co-chaired by the [Regional Activity Center for the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol](#) (SPAW-RAC) under the Cartagena Convention and the [UN Environment – Caribbean Environment Programme](#) (UN Environment – CEP).

The members-at-large are individuals to whom the SC can turn to for technical advice and support for the implementation of specific actions, and who are kept informed of the activities and deliberations of the network. The members-at-large are regionally and gender balanced and include members of key regional organisations.

*Please also provide the following, even if there was no change since your last report:*

Website (URL): <https://gcrmn.net/caribbean/>

Twitter:

LinkedIn:

UNEP-CEP: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/caribbean-environment-programme-cep/posts/?feedView=all>

SPAW-RAC: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/car-spaw-rac/?viewAsMember=true>

## Short activity update

- Please list recent GCRMN-related activities, and relevant outputs (incl. URLs if they are shareable), etc. from your node. Please provide updates to cover the period since the recent regional node meeting in February 2024.

→ Coordination of the GCRMN-Caribbean node:

- GCRMN members online survey first on the Network (April 2023), the second on the Monitoring and capacity (September 2023), the third on bleaching (April 2024).
- Animation of Steering committees (in-person in Nov 2023, 2 virtual meetings in April and this summer).
- Animation of Data Task Forces (2 meetings in June 2024).
- Online surveys conducted (network coordination, monitoring, and capacity-building)
- Survey on Coral bleaching with AGRRA and participation on a regional and global webinar (Judith Lang AGRRA)
- Fundraising for the GCRMN-Caribbean Report (SPAW-RAC).
- Coordination of the GCRMN-Caribbean Report (SPAW-RAC).
- Recruitment of a consultant for the Data Collation & Analysis for the GCRMN-Caribbean report. (SPAW-RAC).
- Organization of a Data Workshop in October 2024 in Puerto Morelos Mexico with 15 experts on data analysis in parallel with a GFCR workshop. (SPAW-RAC).

### The Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025 report

- *Tom and Jeremy are currently undertaking the data collation process for the next GCRMN Global Report. Meetings have been held with regional coordinators and the process on going. Do you need additional support for the collation and submission of coral reef data to the next Global Report?*
- *Do you have any comments or additional questions on the process being undertaken?*

For the Caribbean region. The Regional Report is currently being drafted and will be published in June 2025 at UNOC 3 in Nice.

We have recruited Jeremy Wicquart as data analysis consultant for the period June-December 2024. Following a call for data in July 2024, we are currently in the data collection phase. We are experiencing some difficulties with data collection, which we attribute to the very quiet month of August, but we hope to receive most of the data in September.

The data will be used for both the regional and global reports, thanks to a joint Data Sharing Agreement.

We are currently in the process of organizing and preparing the GCRMN Caribbean Data Workshop in collaboration with the GFCR and adjoining a REEF+ (UNDP) workshop in Puerto Morelos, Mexico, from October 1-4, 2024.

The aim of the workshop is to identify dataset gaps, agree on the analysis methodology for the report, analyze preliminary results and identify case-studies specific to the region.

### Forecast of upcoming node events

- *Please list any major GCRMN-associated events in your region including regional workshops*



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GCRMN/GFCR Data workshop in Puerto Morelos Mexico

COP16 in October 2024 – GCRMN Event on Caribbean report elaboration

GCFI77 in November 2024 – GCRMN Abstract on Regional and Global report elaboration

UNOC3 in June 2025 – Publication and promotion of the 2025 GCRMN Caribbean report.

IUCN Congress in October 2025 – Promotion of the 2025 GCRMN Caribbean report.

# Eastern Tropical Pacific

**Node coordinator(s): Fernando Zapata, Sonia Bejarano**

*Professor Fernando A. Zapata, Universidad del Valle, Cali, Colombia*  
*Dr. Sonia Bejarano, Leibniz Centre for Tropical Marine Research ZMT, Bremen, Germany,*

## Node Governance

*Please provide a brief overview of your nodes governance in terms of operations, functioning and key stakeholders.*

*Please also provide the following, even if there was no change since your last report:*

*Website (URL): <https://nodoetp.weebly.com/>*

*Twitter: ETPNode*

*LinkedIn:*

*Other Social Media:*

## Short activity update

- *Please list recent GCRMN-related activities, and relevant outputs (incl. URLs if they are shareable), etc. from your node. Please provide updates to cover the period since the recent regional node meeting in February 2024.*

- ETP Node Online meeting Feb 15<sup>th</sup> 2024
- ETP Node Online meeting July 15<sup>th</sup> 2024
- Participation of several National coordinators of the ETP Node in the XII Congreso Mexicano de Arrecifes Coralinos (Ensenada, Baja California). (XII Mexican Coral Reef Congress (April 2024)
- April 2024: Paper published: Widespread Coral Bleaching and Mass Mortality of Reef-Building Corals in Southern Mexican Pacific Reefs Due to 2023 El Niño Warming: <https://www.mdpi.com/2673-1924/5/2/12>
- August 2024:
  - Signed contract with IUCN to participate in the *Red List of Ecosystems* project.
  - Application for funds for an in person ETP Node Meeting

## The Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025 report

- *Tom and Jeremy are currently undertaking the data collation process for the next GCRMN Global Report. Meetings have been held with regional coordinators and the process on going. Do you need additional support for the collation and submission of coral reef data to the next Global Report?*

- *Do you have any comments or additional questions on the process being undertaken?*

The benthic cover datasets of each of the ETP node countries are currently being cleaned up and standardised by JP Quimbayo and two Early-Career researchers of the node (A. Arriaga and M. Olan-Gonzalez). So far, the compilation and organization of datasets from Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia has been completed, the compilation of datasets from Mexico and Ecuador (including the Galapagos Islands) are still ongoing and have been completed to about 30%. An additional data set from Chilean oceanic islands remains to be added.

#### **Forecast of upcoming node events**

- *Please list any major GCRMN-associated events in your region including regional workshops*

- ETP Node meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> October
- Regular meetings for the assessment of ETP reefs for IUCN's Red list of ecosystems
- Regular meetings and work sessions for the clean-up and standardisation of datasets in preparation for the Regional Chapter for the GCRMN Global Report.
- Regular meetings to work on a paper reporting the regional-scale patterns of the 2023-2024 bleaching event.

# Pacific

**Node coordinator(s): Serge Planes**

*Serge Planes, PhD*  
*Centre de Recherches Insulaires et Observatoire de l'Environnement (CRIOBE)*

## Short activity update

- *Please list recent GCRMN-related activities, and relevant outputs (incl. URLs if they are shareable), etc. from your node. Please provide updates to cover the period since the recent regional node meeting in February 2024.*

Since February 2024, important progresses have been made on the GCRMN Pacific report, edited by Jérémy Wicquart, Erica Towle, and Serge Planes.

- Introduction. First draft finalised.
- Part 1 – Synthesis for the Pacific region. First draft finalised, will be sent to authors for review.
- Part 2 – Syntheses for countries and territories. Template (using French Polynesia) finalised, will be sent to authors for review.
- Case studies. Five drafts finalised and reviewed.
- Materials and Methods. First draft finalise, will be sent to authors for review.
- Annexes. First draft finalised.

## The Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025 report

- *Tom and Jeremy are currently undertaking the data collation process for the next GCRMN Global Report. Meetings have been held with regional coordinators and the process on going. Do you need additional support for the collation and submission of coral reef data to the next Global Report?*
- *Do you have any comments or additional questions on the process being undertaken?*

We do not need additional support for the data collation of coral reef monitoring data in the Pacific region. Data contributors of the region will be notified about the production of a new GCRMN global report early September, alongside and email about the next steps for the GCRMN Pacific report. Numerous datasets have been collated for the GCRMN Pacific report, and we will ask data contributors to send updated versions of their datasets, to get data for 2023 and 2024. Serge Planes and Jérémy Wicquart will take charge of the data collation for the Pacific region.



### **Forecast of upcoming node events**

- *Please list any major GCRMN-associated events in your region including regional workshops*

Following a large workshop in Auckland (NZ) late 2023, we had not planned any new workshop in 2024 in the context of the Pacific GCRMN report in progress. We shall organize an online meeting end on 2024 – early 2025 with the GCRMN Pacific community to revise the actual report in progress.



## PERSGA (Red Sea & Gulf of Aden)

Node coordinator(s): Maher Amer

**Dr. Maher Amer**  
 Regional Coordinator of Biodiversity & MPAs Program  
 PERSGA

### Node Governance

*Please provide a brief overview of your nodes governance in terms of operations, functioning and key stakeholders.*

*The coral reef monitoring and status in the Red Sea & Gulf of Aden (PERSGA Region) has been undertaken using the umbrella of the Protocol that Concerning the Conservation of Biological Diversity and the Establishment of Network of Protected Areas in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (2005), Coral Reef Regional Action Plan & Jeddah Convention (1982). In each PERSGA member states, there are a coral reef monitoring team, which regularly survey the coral reefs and associated biota in their coastal, submerged reefs and inside protected areas. The PERSGA HQ has two programs, Biodiversity & MPAs Program and Sensitive Habitat & Monitoring Program. All these entities and programs work in harmonization for surveying and collecting reef data to produce SOMERs and coral reef status and trends along the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.*

*Please also provide the following, even if there was no change since your last report:*

**Website (URL):** [www.persga.org](http://www.persga.org)

**Twitter:** @PERSGA\_media

**LinkedIn:**

**Other Social Media:** <https://www.youtube.com/@persgaredsea802/featured>

<https://www.facebook.com/PERSGA.MC>

### Short activity update

- *Please list recent GCRMN-related activities, and relevant outputs (incl. URLs if they are shareable), etc. from your node. Please provide updates to cover the period since the recent regional node meeting in February 2024.*

PERSGA update its standard survey methods for Key species & Habitats in the Red Sea & Gulf of Aden and adding 5 new chapters for the new version including: monitoring of water quality, fishery monitoring, socio-economic monitoring, habitats mapping techniques and Evaluation of management effectiveness of the MPAs network.

Also, PERSGA published the 2nd SOMERSGA (State Of Marine Environment of the Red Sea & Gulf of Aden) that contained 41 indicators following the world assessment report chapters. PERSGA get a project funded by the WB on Sustainable fisheries development in the Red Sea & Gulf of Aden. Through this project we will update the regional and national action plans for the conservation of some charismatic mega fauna (e.g. sea birds, marine turtles, sharks & marine mammals) and assessment and mapping priority areas for restoration of critical fishery habitats mangroves, seagrass and coral reefs, and assist planning, monitoring of long-term restoration plans towards defined phases and preset targets of habitat areas in the Red Sea & Gulf of Aden, and develop/ update regional guidelines and training on restoration techniques, as appropriate.

### The Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025 report

- *Tom and Jeremy are currently undertaking the data collation process for the next GCRMN Global Report. Meetings have been held with regional coordinators and the process on going. Do you need additional support for the collation and submission of coral reef data to the next Global Report?*
- *Do you have any comments or additional questions on the process being undertaken?*

Yes, PERSGA needs support for the collation and submission of coral reef data to the next GCRMN Global report.

### Forecast of upcoming node events

- *Please list any major GCRMN-associated events in your region including regional workshops*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Saudi National Forum on coral bleaching in the Red Sea 4-5<sup>th</sup> June 2024.
- Regional training workshops on restoration techniques for coral reefs in RSGA region during 2025 (TBD later)
- Mapping of priority areas for restoration of coral reef habitats and monitoring and long-term restoration plans towards defined phases and preset targets of habitat areas in PERSGA region (2025)

# ROPME Sea Area (Persian/Arabian Gulf; Gulf of Oman; Western Arabian Sea)

Node coordinator(s): **John A. Burt, New York University Abu Dhabi**

**Note: See Annex 3 for further details on the below information**

## Node Governance

*Please provide a brief overview of your nodes governance in terms of operations, functioning and key stakeholders.*

*The ROPME Regional Coral Reef Monitoring Node is responsible for overseeing coral reef monitoring in all countries within the ROPME Region, namely Iran, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. The node coordinates the collection, management, and reporting of data by engaging with various stakeholders, including government agencies, universities, research institutions, and local NGOs. The coordination of the various stakeholders is managed through node coordinator John Burt and post-doctoral associate Rita Bento (Mubadala ACCESS Center, NYU Abu Dhabi), who host workshops and training sessions related to regional reef monitoring.*

*Please also provide the following, even if there was no change since your last report:*

*Website (URL):* **[www.mideastcoralreefsociety.com](http://www.mideastcoralreefsociety.com)**

*Twitter:* **@mideastcrs**

*LinkedIn:* none

*Other Social Media:* **@mideastcoralreefsociety (Instagram)**

## Short activity update

- *Please list recent GCRMN-related activities, and relevant outputs (incl. URLs if they are shareable), etc. from your node. Please provide updates to cover the period since the recent regional node meeting in February 2024.*

Since February 2024, the ROPME node has gathered an additional 86 reef surveys from the region since 2020, bringing the total to 376 historic reef surveys (totalling more than 24,000 quadrats), entirely benthic (fish data excluded). We have successfully shared several datasets with GCRMN, which to-date comprises a total of 301 reef surveys, representing 58% of the total data. These surveys cover benthic data from 1999 to 2023 across six countries in the region: UAE, Oman, Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, and Qatar; we have not yet received data and/or DSAs for Iraq or Saudi Arabia (Gulf coast) [the latter is particularly a gap as it is known that detailed long-term records are available for a number of reefs in eastern KSA].

### **The Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025 report**

- *Do you need additional support for the collation and submission of coral reef data to the next Global Report?*
- *Do you have any comments or additional questions on the process being undertaken?*

We have successfully submitted data to GCRMN without any major issues. The process has been smooth, and the support has been incredible. Currently, we have 75 reef surveys pending image analysis/annotation, which will be shared with GCRMN afterward. Additionally, there are 177 reef surveys that we plan to share, pending receipt of Data Sharing Agreements from the owners.

#### **Issues:**

As node coordinators, we have limited visibility on what data was provided in 2019/20 for the 2020 report, and this is an issue. We need to understand what was provided earlier (not only in summary but in detailed raw form) so we can ensure that this data 1) is also included in the 2025 report, 2) that we are not duplicating by resending the same datasets multiple times, and 3) to ensure that all historic data is captured for our upcoming data paper (where DSAs have been obtained). We also need this information (importantly) for understanding what NEW pre-2020 information we have collected, so that we can show funding partners that we have augmented the current (2020-2024) AND the historic datasets through literature reviews, networking, workshops, etc.

### **Forecast of upcoming node events**

- *Please list any major GCRMN-associated events in your region including regional workshops*

In September 2024, we will be hosting the second regional reef monitoring workshop in UAE. This event will bring together regional reef specialists to share with them the collated set of historic reef survey data (particularly since the 2020 report) and discuss challenged with the standardized reef monitoring and data archival approach that was agreed at the last workshop (May 2023). The workshop will also provide updates on the latest regional coral reef assessments for the GCRMN and preliminary data that has been generated for the upcoming 2025 reef status report, allowing participants to validate regional reef modeling results.

As a side note, NYUAD's Mubadala ACCESS team is also planning to conduct a Red List of Ecosystems for coral reefs in the ROPME Sea Area using the IUCN's standardized approach. We will spend a morning training stakeholders on the process, and will engage them to come to consensus on aspects such as spatial sub-divisions (sub-regions of interest) and criteria for assessment (e.g. coral cover, cover of acroporids, coverage of turf, etc.).

## East Asia

**Node coordinator(s): Tadashi KIMURA (Japan), Karenne TUN (Singapore)**

*Tadashi KIMURA, Chief Advisor, Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC),  
Karenne TUN, Director of Coastal and Marine, National Parks Board,*

\*We used to use “node” for the smaller category of the regional network like “Southeast Asia” and “East and North Asia” in 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2008 status reports edited by Dr. Clive Wilkinson. We have used “region” for wider category of the network since when we combined two nodes (“Southeast Asia” and “East and North Asia”) into one wider network (“East Asia region”) to share the funding opportunity. We also use “regional coordinators” instead of “node coordinators”.

### Node Governance

The East Asia regional coordinators support 14 countries and states of East Asia Region with annual workshop/meeting funded by the Ministry of the Environment, Japan to maintain their network. The Ministry also provides additional fund for supporting individual countries in the region on enhancement of coral reef monitoring and conservation.

East Asia regional member countries and states:

- East and North Asia: China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea
- Southeast Asia: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam

National coordinators of 14 countries and states in the region formulate a steering committee of the Asia Pacific Coral Reef Society (APCoRS) that organize the Asia Pacific Coral Reef Symposium (APCRS) every 4 years since 2006.

APCoRS Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/APCoRS/>

APCRS 2023 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/apcrs2023/>

### Short activity update

- *Please list recent GCRMN-related activities, and relevant outputs (incl. URLs if they are shareable), etc. from your node. Please provide updates to cover the period since the recent regional node meeting in February 2024.*

East Asia region is preparing to organize a regional workshop at the Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) on October 31 and November 1 in 2024 funded by the Ministry of the Environment, Japan.

National coordinators of the 14 countries and states and regional experts on data analysis will be invited to discuss regional/global data analysis and reporting.

The aim of the workshop is to discuss and proceed the process of the regional/global data analysis in the region.

### **The Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025 report**

- *Tom and Jeremy are currently undertaking the data collation process for the next GCRMN Global Report. Meetings have been held with regional coordinators and the process on going. Do you need additional support for the collation and submission of coral reef data to the next Global Report?*
- *Do you have any comments or additional questions on the process being undertaken?*

As one of the preparation processes for the regional workshop, draft agenda and related documents (e.g. Data Sharing Agreement for the next Global Report, Regional Data Sharing Agreement and data templates) will be circulated among the national coordinators for the pre-workshop discussion.

### **Forecast of upcoming node events**

- *Please list any major GCRMN-associated events in your region including regional workshops*

- 2024 (October 31- November 01): GCRMN East Asia Regional Workshop (@Palau International Coral Reef Center) on regional/global data analysis
- 2025 (Date: TBD): GCRMN East Asia Region & COBSEA joint Workshop (@TBD) on regional/global data analysis
- 2026 (Date: TBD): 6<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Coral Reef Symposium (APCRS) (@Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia)



Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network  
An operational network of ICRI hosted by the Australian Institute of Marine Science

[www.gcrmn.net](http://www.gcrmn.net)

## Western Indian Ocean

### Node coordinator(s):

*Please provide name(s), titles, affiliations and contact email address(es) of current node coordinators*

Dr Karin Moejes  
Senior Scientist and Coral Reef Programme Manager  
CORDIO East Africa  
[kmoejes@cordioea.net](mailto:kmoejes@cordioea.net)

Mr Swaleh Aboud  
Scientist  
CORDIO East Africa  
[saboud@cordioea.net](mailto:saboud@cordioea.net)

Dr David Obura  
Director  
CORDIO East Africa

### Node Governance



*Please provide a brief overview of your nodes governance in terms of operations, functioning and key stakeholders.*

Coral reef monitoring in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) has been undertaken using the umbrella of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) and the Nairobi Convention's Coral Reef Task Force (CRTF), since the late 1990s. The CRTF was constituted by a decision of the Nairobi Convention in 2001, with a representative from each country.

Traditionally, the Southwest Indian Ocean (SWIO) islands and the mainland East Africa nodes of the GCRMN have operated independently, but in the last decade, these have been integrated more closely through the CRTF. This effort is supported through projects in the Marine Programme of the Indian Ocean Commission – the ISLANDS Project (2009-13) and Biodiversity Project (2014-2018). Following a workshop held in Moroni, Comoros, 1-3 March 2023, comprising representatives from the Nairobi Convention region, the Convention secretariat is now revitalizing coral reef monitoring and other related activities agreement by establishing a new Coral Reef Technical Working Group on Coral Reefs to supersede the Coral Reef Task Force.

We are currently planning our next regional workshop in Q1 2025 with GFCR and UNEP.

*Please also provide the following, even if there was no change since your last report:*

*Website (URL):*

*Twitter:*

*LinkedIn:*

*Other Social Media: Email – [gcrmn@cordioea.net](mailto:gcrmn@cordioea.net)*

### Short activity update

- *Please list recent GCRMN-related activities, and relevant outputs (incl. URLs if they are shareable), etc. from your node. Please provide updates to cover the period since the recent regional node meeting in February 2024.*

#### **National Coral Reef Assessment (NCRA) Workshops - Tanzania:**

- In March 2024, we successfully held two workshops for the Pemba Channel Conservation Area (PECCA) and Mafia Island Marine Park (MIMP). These workshops engaged over 70 participants, including government officials, marine park managers, and local community members, focusing on the NCRA and its alignment with the Red List of Ecosystems (RLE) Criterion D, which addresses the disruption of biotic processes.
- PECCA: Conducted a validation workshop in March 2024 with 31 participants, including representatives from the Ministry of Blue Economy and Fisheries, PECCA management, and the Institute of Marine Science (IMS). The validated results will be integrated into PECCA's management strategy and the national RLE process for Tanzania.
- MIMP: Similarly, a validation workshop for MIMP with 44 participants confirmed the NCRA results as a reliable tool for decision-making. These validated findings will also be incorporated into the national RLE process.
- The NCRA workshops and the validation of results are pivotal in informing the national Red List of Ecosystems (RLE) process by providing essential data on coral reef status. Aligning with the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) goals, integrating NCRA results into the RLE and sharing them through the GCRMN framework enhances global understanding of coral reef health and supports the development of effective conservation strategies at both national and global levels.

#### **National Coral Reef Assessment (NCRA) Inception Workshop - Mozambique:**

- In August 2024, we successfully held the inception workshop for the National Coral Reef Assessment (NCRA) in Mozambique. This workshop set the foundation for the assessment process, engaging key stakeholders, including national institutes and organizations, to collaborate closely on the analysis.
- The workshop outlined a detailed roadmap for conducting the NCRA, emphasizing the integration of national expertise in the analysis process. This collaborative approach ensures that the assessment is tailored to Mozambique's specific needs and priorities.
- The roadmap also includes plans for applying the NCRA results to strengthen Mozambique's national coral reef strategy and broader national conservation strategy (NBSAP). This alignment directly supports the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) by ensuring that national targets are in harmony with global conservation goals.
- By aligning the NCRA process with the Red List of Ecosystems (RLE) and integrating the results within the GCRMN framework, Mozambique's efforts will contribute to a broader understanding of coral reef health. This integration enhances the development of effective conservation strategies at both national and global levels, supporting the overarching goals of the GBF.

#### **Global Coral Reef RLE with GCRMN Nodes:**

- Engaged with the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) and the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) to streamline the global coral reef RLE regional process. As a result, the Eastern Tropical Pacific and ROPME GCRMN nodes are moving forward with the assessment.
- Completed the establishment of data sharing standards and an online code repository based on the Western Indian Ocean RLE regional coral reef assessment. This repository will support regional Coral Reef Red List of Ecosystems assessments, providing detailed steps for data pre-processing, criteria evaluation, and visualization.

#### **Coral Reef Monitoring:**

- This year, we conducted coral reef monitoring surveys in Tanzania, Madagascar, and Comoros to assess reef health and inform conservation strategies
- We swiftly responded to bleaching events through regional collaborative monitoring efforts, issuing bi-monthly alerts, and conducting post-bleaching assessments. These efforts are crucial in understanding the impact of bleaching and informing both immediate and long-term management responses.

**Coordination for the GCRMN 2025 Global Status Report:**

- We are enhancing the coordination process through regional activities, including the collation of data for the upcoming GCRMN 2025 report. This includes gathering data from various regional monitoring efforts to ensure comprehensive coverage and to contribute to the global understanding of coral reef health

**Relevant Publications:**

- Gudka, M., Obura, D., Trembl, E. A. et al. (2024) Leveraging the Red List of Ecosystems for national action on coral reefs through the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. BioRxiv
  - <https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2024.02.18.580850v1.abstract>
- Gudka, M., Obura, D., Trembl, E. A., and Nicholson, E. (2024). Strengthening resilience potential assessments for coral reef management. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, 15, 612–627.
  - <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/2041-210X.14303>
- Gudka, M., Samoilys, M., Musembi, P. et al. (2024) Complex coral reefs offer hope for management in a Marine Protected Area in Zanzibar. *Regional Studies in Marine Science* 77.
  - <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352485524003001>

- *Tom and Jeremy are currently undertaking the data collation process for the next GCRMN Global Report. Meetings have been held with regional coordinators and the process on going. Do you need additional support for the collation and submission of coral reef data to the next Global Report?*
- *Do you have any comments or additional questions on the process being undertaken?*

CORDIO East Africa, as the regional coordinators, have been working with the data contributors in the Western Indian Ocean for the Red List of Ecosystems as well as national coral reef assessments in 5 countries of the region; Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, and Comoros. We will continue to collaborate with the data contributors of these countries for data collection for the ICRI 2025 Global Status Report. CORDIO East Africa has also been in communication with partners in Somalia who plan surveys in 2024 and aim to have some data potentially included in the 2025 report. During the GCRMN Steering Committee CORDIO will have discussions with representatives from Mayotte (France) and Seychelles to discuss data contributions. CORDIO will reach out to ICRI for support, when necessary, in securing data contributions for the report.

**Forecast of upcoming node events**

- *Please list any major GCRMN-associated events in your region including regional workshops*



**Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network**  
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[www.gcrmn.net](http://www.gcrmn.net)

A regional workshop is planned with GFCR and UNEP in Q1 of 2025

# The Global Socioeconomic Monitoring Initiative for Coastal Management (SocMon)

## Node coordinator(s):

Mary E. Allen, Ph.D.  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Coral Reef Conservation Program  
[mary.allen@noaa.gov](mailto:mary.allen@noaa.gov)

## Node Governance

SocMon is an ICRI initiative aimed at helping coastal managers better understand and incorporate the socioeconomic context into coastal management programs. SocMon operates through 7 regional nodes, each with a regional coordinator(s): Brazil, Caribbean, Central America, Pacific Islands, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Western Indian Ocean. For more details: <https://icriforum.org/socmon/>

## Short activity update

- *Please list recent GCRMN-related activities, and relevant outputs (incl. URLs if they are shareable), etc. from your node. Please provide updates to cover the period since the recent regional node meeting in February 2024.*

### **SocMon contributed 4 socioeconomic case studies to the GCRMN Pacific Report.**

The case studies include American Samoa, Hawaii, Guam, and Micronesia. This is the first time ever that human dimensions and social science data have been featured in a regional GCRMN status report.

### **Planning is underway for SocMon contributions to the GCRMN Caribbean Report.**

This is likely to take a similar approach to contribution to the GCRMN Pacific Report, i.e., providing SocMon case studies. While there are a lot of quantitative socioeconomic data sets for the Caribbean that could be incorporated with the biophysical data sets being requested, there would be challenges to standardize and consolidate the data, run statistical analyses and models.

**SocMon conducted training in the Southeast Asia Region.** Dr. Vineeta Hoon and Mr. Phillip Townsley led a socioeconomic monitoring training with SEAFDEC to support small-scale fisheries management in Southeast Asia. They conducted field exercises with village communities in Thailand to collect data using the SocMon Methodology. Overall findings highlight the importance of fisheries and agriculture to community livelihoods, as well as a growing environmental awareness and commitment to sustainability through active community participation in fisheries management.

## The Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025 report

- *Tom and Jeremy are currently undertaking the data collation process for the next GCRMN Global Report. Meetings have been held with regional coordinators and the process on going. Do you need additional support for the collation and submission of coral reef data to the next Global Report?*
- *Do you have any comments or additional questions on the process being undertaken?*

Discussions about SocMon case studies to contribute to the report are underway.

### **Forecast of upcoming node events**

- *Please list any major GCRMN-associated events in your region including regional workshops*

SocMon was invited to lead an interdisciplinary social-ecological workshop in the UK in February 2025. Dr. Mary Allen (NOAA, USA Global SocMon Coordinator) and Dr. Rodrigo Pereira Medeiros (Brazil SocMon Coordinator) are leading a workshop at the Socio-Oceanography Conference in Southampton, UK. The workshop invites social and ecological scientists to participate in developing a new framework for integrated, participatory monitoring approaches to marine protected areas. This workshop will foster collaboration between social scientists and natural biophysical scientists and facilitate new partnerships in the GCRMN and beyond.

More information: <https://projects.noc.ac.uk/socio-oceanography/workshops>

## South Asia

### Node coordinator(s):

*Ms. Rokeya Khaton*  
*Director General*  
*South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP)*

### Node Governance

*Please provide a brief overview of your nodes governance in terms of operations, functioning and key stakeholders.*

*SACEP is an Intergovernmental Organization of eight Member countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka)*

*The Governing Council (GC) is the principal deliberative and review body responsible for determining policies, strategies and programmes. It is represented at the ministerial level. National Focal Points (NFP) --secretaries of the ministries of environment are the designated national focal points of SACEP in the member countries and they facilitate the work of the secretariat and function as the main communication link with the member states.*

*The Consultative Committee (CC) consists of representatives of diplomatic missions of member countries residing in Colombo. The CC is also expected to provide guidance to the secretariat in the planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects.*

*The Secretariat- Comprises of the Director General, Technical and Administrative Staff.*

*Please also provide the following, even if there was no change since your last report:*

*Website (URL): [www.sacep.org](http://www.sacep.org)*

*Twitter:*

*LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/sacep-org>*

*Other Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/sacep.org/>*

### The Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025 report

- *Tom and Jeremy are currently undertaking the data collation process for the next GCRMN Global Report. Meetings have been held with regional coordinators and the process on going. Do you need additional support for the collation and submission of coral reef data to the next Global Report?*
- *Do you have any comments or additional questions on the process being undertaken?*



*As the designated Node Coordinator for the South Asia Region, SACEP has been actively engaged in discussions to explore opportunities for streamlining the data collation process across the region. These efforts are aimed at producing a comprehensive, detailed, and up-to-date assessment of coral reef health*

*As a way forward, SACEP, in partnership with GCRMN, will be organizing an online workshop specifically designed for the National Focal Points of SACEP. This workshop will focus on facilitating discussions around data collection methodologies, improving coordination between countries, and ensuring that the South Asia region contributes robust and reliable data to the global report. The workshop will serve as a platform for key stakeholders to exchange knowledge, address challenges, and align efforts in the region's coral reef monitoring activities.*

#### **Forecast of upcoming node events**

- *Please list any major GCRMN-associated events in your region including regional workshops*
  - *The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) South Asia Regional Online Workshop*
  - *Coral Reef Red List of Ecosystems (RLE) Assessment, South Asia Regional Online Workshop*





**Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network**  
*An operational network of ICRI hosted by the Australian Institute of Marine Science*

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[www.gcrmn.net](http://www.gcrmn.net)

# ANNEX 3: ROPME Region Detailed Report

## Regional Node Update Detailed Report: ROPME Region

### Mubadala ACCESS Regional Coral Reef Monitoring Program

**John A. Burt and Rita Bento**  
Mubadala ACCESS Center  
New York University Abu Dhabi

#### The ROPME Sea Area

The Regional Organisation for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) Sea Area (RSA) has faced significant challenges over the past decades. Coral reefs in the region and globally support marine biodiversity and provide essential ecosystem services. However, these ecosystems have been under increasing pressure from both local and global stressors.

As highlighted in the 2020 “Status of Coral Reefs of the World” report, coral cover in the RSA has suffered substantial declines, primarily due to mass bleaching events caused by elevated sea surface temperatures linked to climate change. While there were periods of recovery between 2012 and 2017, these were often short-lived. Recurrent bleaching events have continued to test the resilience of these reefs, leading to a continued decline in coral cover and a shift to an algae-dominated state in some parts of the region. There is an urgency to address these regional threats by joining regional and global efforts and maintaining the continued monitoring and data collection to better understand these trends and implement effective conservation strategies. The need for resilient management practices and mitigation actions in the RSA has never been more critical.

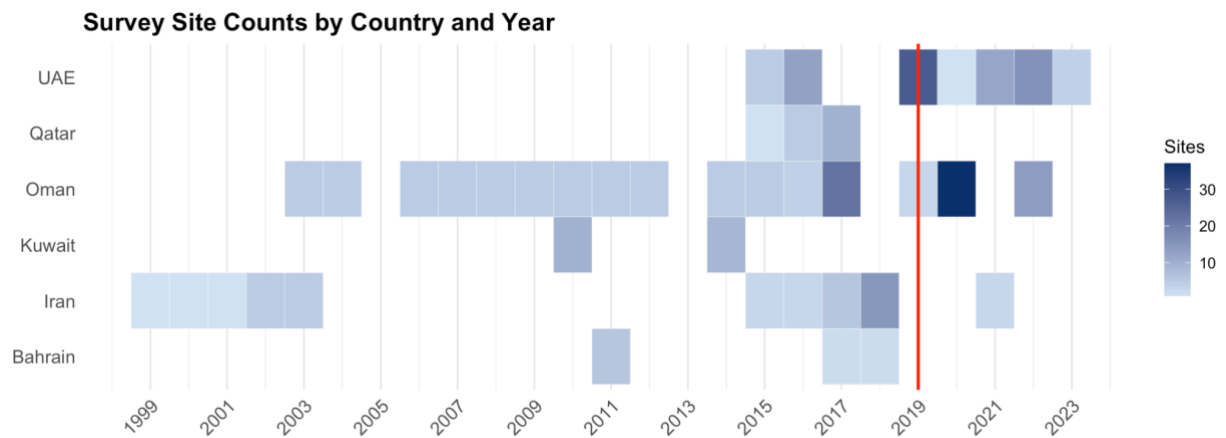
#### Standardization of Methods

To address regional challenges, the ROPME Region Coral Reef Monitoring Program was established by New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) as part of a broader effort to systematically monitor and protect coral reefs across the region. During the *Northeastern Arabia Reef Monitoring Workshop* in 2023, stakeholders from most RSA countries (except Iraq) gathered to discuss the urgent challenges faced by regional reefs, particularly those related to the impacts of climate change. Recognizing the critical need for a coordinated approach, participants discussed and agreed on a standardized methodology for coral reef monitoring. This workshop was instrumental in establishing the ROPME Region Coral Reef Monitoring Program, and building towards subsequent successes in data collection and sharing.

New protocols and guidelines were presented during the workshops to ensure the consistency and comparability of future data collected across the region. An agreement on a standardized reef monitoring methodology was achieved, including the use of photoquadrats and AI predictive models for annotations, which will significantly enhance the accuracy and efficiency of reef monitoring efforts. An important outcome of the workshop was the establishment of data sharing agreements (DSAs) between NYUAD and the various institutions involved. These DSAs are essential for integrating data across the region and ensuring that the information collected can be effectively utilized in upcoming reports, including a regional data paper and the GCRMN 2025 global report. This collaborative effort represents a significant step forward in the monitoring, management, and protection of the region's vital coral reef ecosystems.

### **Ongoing Data Consolidation**

Since the 2023 workshop, NYUAD has been actively consolidating coral reef data across the RSA as part of the ROPME Region Coral Reef Monitoring Program. Workshop participants have engaged in in-person and online collaborations, receiving targeted training to address specific data collection and analysis challenges and needs. In addition to collecting new data, the program has also focused on gathering historical data from previously collected or published sources within the region. Integrating historical data is crucial for providing a comprehensive, long-term perspective on coral reef health. More organizations have shown interest in contributing to data gathering efforts, increasing the number of DSAs and facilitating the inclusion of additional data in ongoing analyses. Data from six countries - Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) - have been successfully gathered and analyzed. The surveys span multiple years, from 1999 to 2023, reflecting a long-term commitment to understanding the health of regional reefs (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Number of surveyed sites data gathered from six ROPME countries across different years, spanning 24 years. This graph illustrates the distribution of survey efforts across the region, highlighting the intensity of surveys in each country over time, with color gradient representing the number of sites surveyed per year. The red line on 2019 represents the period when data was submitted for the 2020 GCRMN report.

The data collected from these surveys will form the basis of a forthcoming data paper, which aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing data on regional coral reefs. This paper will enhance the accessibility and utility of this information for ongoing and future research efforts, contributing to a deeper understanding of the RSA coral reef health and supporting global efforts to study and conserve these critical ecosystems.

### Upcoming Reports and Events

As a continuation of the 2023 workshop, the *Status and Trends of Arabian Gulf Coral Reefs Workshop* in September 2024 will be an important event in the ongoing effort to conserve coral reefs in the region. Regional reef specialists will come together to discuss data shared among the groups since the previous workshop and to review challenges related to the established standardized monitoring protocols. Key objectives include presenting new regional results, validating reef modeling for the 2025 global report, and introducing the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems for Coral Reefs assessment process. The workshop aims to achieve more accurate and representative assessments of coral reef health across the region by pooling expertise, data, and resources.

The 2025 regional report will offer a detailed analysis of coral reef trends in the RSA, drawing on data gathered through the ROPME Region Coral Reef Monitoring Program. Since the 2020 GCRMN report, we have expanded our data collection efforts significantly, covering an

additional 10 years and 131 more reef surveys. The data collected will support the development of the regional chapter of the 2025 GCRMN report and will be used in a dedicated regional data paper that will quantify and share this information with the scientific community, offering a valuable resource for ongoing research and conservation efforts.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

Despite ongoing efforts, significant challenges remain in obtaining data from various institutions and encouraging the adoption of the standardized methodology. Some organizations continue to use methods like Reef Check, which, while widely respected, do not provide the detailed information necessary for in-depth studies of coral reefs in the RSA. Convincing some stakeholders of the benefits of data sharing has been particularly challenging, yet this collaboration is crucial, especially in considering current and future climate impacts. The increasing availability of standardized, high-quality data offers a solid foundation for informed management decisions, and enhancing regional cooperation, especially in the wider RSA, presents significant opportunities to address shared challenges. Coral reefs in the RSA continue to face significant challenges, with climate change being the primary threat, driving severe bleaching events, including the 2024 bleaching event (ongoing at the time of writing). As the current bleaching event unfolds, the need for unified efforts has never been more critical.