

International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)

Member's Report | 38th General Meeting

9th – 13th September 2024 Jeddah, – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Reporting Period: 2023 & 2024

A. Member Information:

- Name of ICRI member: Jamaica
- Name of person(s) completing member's report: Chanel Raynor
- Position/Title: Coordinator- Ecosystems
- Email: chanel.raynor@nepa.gov.jm
- Are you a designated ICRI Focal Point: ☐ Yes ☒ No
 - If no, please indicate who you are completing the form on behalf of: Ms.
 Monique Curtis
- Which was the last General Meeting you attended: 37th General Meeting in Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i.
- Will you be attending the 38th ICRI General Meeting in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: ⊠ Yes □ No
- Member social media:
 - Twitter/X: @nepajamaica Instagram: @nepajamaica



B. Reporting on the implementation of the ICRI Plan of Action 2021-2024: turning the tide for coral reefs. Your responses will help inform the Secretariat about members' contributions toward the current Plan of Action. You can download the ICRI Plan of Action here: https://icriforum.org/documents/plan-of-action-2021-2024/

What are the main contributions you, as an ICRI member, have made to the ICRI Plan of Action?

Theme 1 - Preparing for the Future: Promoting Resilient Coral Reefs

Theme 2 - Coral Reef Science and Oceanography: Advancing and Utilizing the Latest Science and Technology

Theme 3 - Local Threat Reduction: Integrating Response Planning Frameworks

Theme 4 - Diversity and Inclusion: Expanding the Coral Reef Community

Answer:

Under the Theme 1 - Preparing for the Future: Promoting Resilient Coral Reefs, the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) continues the tracking and the implementation of the Action Plan for Corals and Reefs 2018-2023 (APCAR), the implementation a coral reef health index monitoring programme and a sea-surface temperature monitoring programme. The APCAR builds on previous efforts such as the Draft Jamaica Coral Reef Action Plan, the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) Call to Action and Framework for Action and the Tropical Americas' Agenda for Action which were intended to mobilize governments and other stakeholders whose coordinated, vigorous and effective actions are required to sustain fragile coastal resources, and the communities which depend on them. The APCAR is intended to be revisited, evaluated and updated regularly as conditions change and the relevant adaptive management strategies incorporated. To align with NEPA's Strategic Action Plan (SAP), coral reef health index monitoring is conducted every 3 years at 20 sites across the island, prior to 2023 this was conducted annually. Jamaica's sea surface temperature monitoring (2015 to present) serves several critical objectives such as assessing the impact of climate change on coral reefs, identifying temperature tolerant clusters which can inform the selection of coral species for restoration projects and the use of trends to improve the island's adaptive management for coral reefs. Additionally, the Agency is currently developing a national restoration plan which will drive restoration activities for coral for the next decade.

Resilience-based management (RBM) practices are also implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions. Notably, The Nature Conservancy (TNC-Jamaica) has made significant contributions by hosting several workshops and webinars aimed at building the capacity of marine protected area managers. These initiatives focus on integrating RBM strategies into their workflows and employing a variety of propagation and survey techniques alongside more climate-adaptive conservation strategies.



Implementation of *Theme 2 - Coral Reef Science and Oceanography: Advancing and Utilizing the Latest Science and Technology* - is demonstrated through the use of 3D imaging technologies such as photogrammetry (e.g., Structure-from-Motion). Jamaica's execution of the Coralcarib Project, which is being implemented regionally by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and locally by the Alligator Head Foundation (AHF), will include capacity-building efforts. These efforts involve training local implementing partners in the use of Structure-from-Motion technology, currently employed by FUNDEMAR and the Grupo Puntacana Foundation, project partners based in the Dominican Republic. The project will conduct gamete dispersal models and establish a spawning calendar for the project site. The spawning calendar is proposed to be expanded island-wide with the help of marine protected area managers and community-based partnership volunteers.

In keeping with the activity under this theme relating to the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRM), Jamaica continues to contribute coral reef data for reefs island-wide. The 'Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2020' report influenced the Agency's new strategic framework for monitoring and reporting on the island's coral reef index. Under the NEPA Strategic Action Plan 2021-2031, one Key Performance Target is "Coral reef health index improved to 'fair' rating". This target is to be reported on every three years. The assessments are usually done using the Coral Reef Health Index, which is determined by reviewing four indicators, namely coral cover, macro-algal cover, herbivorous fish abundance and commercially important fish abundance. It was observed that data acquired was not comparable across regions. It is suggested that contributors are sensitized on the data set relevant to the publication for a comprehensive world report. This will be critical in the monitoring of coral reef targets associated with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Regarding the implementation of *Theme 3 - Local Threat Reduction: Integrating Response Planning Frameworks*, dedicated plans for addressing the various threats to coral reefs have not yet been developed by the Agency. However, existing regional protocols and response plans have been adopted by NEPA, researchers, and protected area managers for use across the island. For example:

-Vessel groundings- The Agency's response involves the use of the 'ICRI Coral Reef CSI Toolkit' to assess impacts to coral reefs and the economic value of ecological services lost; this has been used to pursue legal action for financial compensation to finance restoration activities at impact sites.

-Coral disease & bleaching- The Agency's response incorporates recommendations from the Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment (AGRRA) Program, Coral Restoration Consortium, regional universities and publications. For example, the Agency maintains discourse with MPA managers and research facilities to track the spread of coral bleaching and diseases. During the onset of the 2023 bleaching event, the Agency recommended that coral nurseries are relocated to deeper, cooler water where possible and species with limited genetic diversity are duplicated via ex-situ and in-situ methods.



-Invasive alien species outbreaks (lionfish): Jamaica continues the practice of culling lionfish, one of the activities which commenced during the MTIASIC Project² (2009-2013). This is primarily done on an ad hoc basis if the species is encountered. The National Lionfish Project was led by the University of the West Indies- Discovery Bay Marine Laboratory (UWI-DBML) and NEPA. Activities included training in culling and handling the species as well as a major public education programme geared at encouraging local consumption of the invasive alien species. Owing to the success of the project, consumption was widespread along with the culling of the species especially in MPA, and is now a routine occurrence practiced by fishers, recreational skin divers, scuba divers and MPA managers.

Implementation of *Theme 4 - Diversity and Inclusion: Expanding the Coral Reef Community* includes activities such as developing outreach materials tailored to targeted audiences to inspire change. This is carried out by NEPA through its early childhood education programs, marine protected area mangers and by academic institutions. For example, the Port Royal Marine Laboratory at the University of the West Indies has an interactive interpretive center that 'brings the marine ecosystem to land.' Equipped with touch experiences and interactive information about all coastal and marine ecosystems, the center helps visitors become better stewards of their environment.

Noting the invaluable contribution of community stakeholders, local knowledge is captured in NEPA's policies primarily through processes which require stakeholder consultation. For example: Preparation of a Development Order. A Development Order is a legal instrument that regulates land use and development within specific areas. It designates different zones or areas for various types of land uses, such as residential, commercial, agricultural, industrial, and conservation areas. It outlines the permissible land uses, building regulations, and other development controls that developers and property owners must adhere to within the designated zone. Development Orders play a crucial role in guiding sustainable and organized development while protecting natural resources and the environment. A key step in preparation of the document is extensive stakeholder consultation. The information gained can range from historical land use practices, local fishing sites to the location of coral reef which may not have been previously assessed by the Agency. This is used to ensure that development activities align with the country's planning policies, localized priorities of citizens and responsible management of natural resources to promote balanced growth. This approach is also used for other policies such as MPA management and zoning plans and the preparation of recommendations for the boundaries of protected areas.

• (ICRI) What are your upcoming priorities for coral reefs?

Answer:

The Action Plan for Corals and Reefs (APCAR) represents a comprehensive strategy for the permanent conservation of coral reefs, developed with an understanding of the dynamic challenges involved in protecting coastal ecosystems, without establishing

¹ Gulko et al. (2008) ICRI Coral Reef CSI Toolkit

² Under the regional project Mitigating the Threats of Invasive Alien Species in the Insular Caribbean (MTIASIC) (2009-2013) Jamaica implemented a Lionfish component.



specific priorities. As a result, the Action Plan calls for the participation of various agencies in achieving specific conservation objectives but does not constitute a binding agreement for implementation. The execution of these objectives will be determined by prevailing economic conditions and the availability of budgetary support.

Upcoming priorities for coral reefs include:

- i. Integrating coral reefs and associated ecosystems into Jamaica's National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan (NBSAP);
- ii. Updating Jamaica's Action Plan for Corals and Reefs (APCAR) to strengthen adaptive management strategies;
- iii. Implementing the ban on oxybenzone products (sunscreen ban);
- iv. Conducting mapping of surviving corals to identify climate-resilient lineages;
- v. developing a spawning calendar for Jamaica to facilitate opportunities for sexual propagation in restoration projects.
- C. Reporting on the Restoration of Coral Reefs (Target 2 GBF/Action Point 3 Coral Reef Breakthrough)
 - (ICRI) Are you able to estimate the total area (km²) of coral reef under active restoration and the total area you consider to be 'restored', as a result of your organisation/country's in 2023?
 - o Total area under active restoration in 2023: 26.6 km²
 - o Total area considered to be restored in 2023: 0 km²
 - (ICRI) If available, please provide further information on the total area considered to be restored, and under active restoration for the total period of the restoration programme, including the timeframe:

Answer:

The total area under active restoration was calculated using the size of the project area as reported in project documents. In instances where this information was not available the size of the respective marine protected area is used conservatively. The areas under restoration between 2023 to 2024 are as follows:

- -East Portland Coral Refugia by The Nature Foundation (TNC) and the Alligator Head Foundation. Under the ongoing CoralCarib³ Project approximately 5.13 km² of coral reef is under active restoration. The project is being implemented from 2022 to 2028.
- -Montego Bay, St. James by the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA). The NEPA is currently conducting coral reef restoration at a site impact by a ship grounding within the Montego Bay Marine Park. The restoration area is approximately 0.002796 km² (2,796 m²). The consultancy overseeing the restoration work will run from 2023 to 2026.



-White River, St. Ann by the White River Marine Association. The White River Marine Association manages the White River Special Fishery Conservation Area (SFCA), which is located within the Ocho Rios Marine Park and encompasses approximately 1.5 km². The Association is actively engaged in ongoing coral restoration activities in this area, aligning with the conservation strategies outlined in NEPA's management plan for the Ocho Rios Marine Park Protected Area. These efforts are contingent upon the availability of funding to ensure their continuation.

-Port Royal Cays by the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) & Reef Construction Limited (RCL). The Port Royal Cays, located within the Palisadoes-Port Royal Protected Area, are currently the focus of two projects: one led by NEPA and the other by Reef Construction Limited (RCL), a private entity. The total restoration area for both projects is approximately 20 km². The restoration work for RCL has been authorized by the regulatory body for the period from 2023 to 2028. The NEPA is currently conducting coral reef restoration at a site impacted by a ship grounding (approx. 5,000 m² impacted). The consultancy overseeing the restoration work on behalf of NEPA will run from 2023 to 2026.

3"CoralCarib: Pioneering a new strategic approach for conserving and restoring Caribbean coral reef ecosystems that targets Climate Resilient Refugia" Project .

- (ICRI) For the purpose of the above, please provide definitions for how your programme/organisation/country considers coral reefs to be:
 - o A) Under active restoration
 - o B) Restored

Answer:

Under active Restoration:

Under active restoration refers to projects with the requisite regulatory approvals from the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) to handle hard coral species, as well as projects that have made applications to NEPA for approval to handle corals. These projects include any activities aimed at rehabilitating and enhancing the health, structure, and function of the coral reef ecosystem. Such efforts may encompass hard coral propagation/outplanting; algal removal; water quality maintenance; and areas with sustained monitoring and maintenance programs.

Restored:

This refers to the total area of coral reef that has been successfully rehabilitated to a state that demonstrates ecological functions, biodiversity, and resilience comparable to its natural, pre-degradation condition, as a result of restoration efforts. From a regulatory standpoint, NEPA considers restoration successful if there is at least a 70% survival rate of out-planted corals, typically measured over a 3- to 5-year period. However, it is noted that as threats such as bleaching events and disease outbreaks become more frequent, it is increasingly likely for a restored area to regress to a state of reduced ecological function.



Does your country have any restoration policies or regulations?

Many locations have outdated and insufficient regulations for coral reef restoration, resulting in inadequate oversight of restoration efforts. In addition, the absence, limitations, or differences among regulations between countries prevents the development and implementation of effective regional coral reef conservation strategies.

• (ICRI) Please describe the restoration policies or regulations (if any) that are in place in your country.

Answer:

Jamaica does not have dedicated policies/regulations for restoration. However, having recognized the importance of coral reefs for both biodiversity and the livelihoods of its coastal communities, coral restoration efforts are integrated into various management plans as part of broader strategies for coral reef ecosystem conservation. These measures are managed primarily by the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) and are part of a broader strategy to ensure the long-term health and resilience of coral reefs. Below are some key points outlining Jamaica's approach to coral restoration and conservation efforts.

- 1. National Action Plan for Coral Reefs: Jamaica's Action Plan for Corals and Reefs (APCAR) is designed to guide coral conservation and restoration efforts. This plan includes strategies for sustainable coral reef management and the implementation of coral restoration projects. Target 15 spoke to the restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems by 2020. However, this target was not met and the document is to be revised in 2024.
- 2. Permits and Regulatory Approvals: NEPA regulates activities involving coral restoration and the handling of coral species under The Wild Life Protection Act, 1945, which provides legal protection for corals and other fauna. Practitioners wishing to handle or possess any coral species for restoration, educational or research purposes must apply for a 'Wildlife Exemption Permit.' This permit ensures that all restoration activities comply with the Act's provisions and environmental standards. Wild life exemption permits are often accompanied by a beach licence for nursery structures anchored to the seafloor.
- 3. Protected Areas (marine & terrestrial): Jamaica has designated several marine protected areas (MPAs) where coral restoration activities are often focused. Management plans for these MPAs typically include provisions for coral conservation and restoration efforts, monitoring, and sustainable use practices.

As a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Jamaica is implementing the Programme of Work on Protected Areas which requires Parties to: "develop comprehensive, effectively managed and ecologically representative national and regional systems of terrestrial and marine protected areas... to contribute to achieving the objectives of the Convention, to help reduce biodiversity loss and contribute to poverty reduction and the pursuit of sustainable development."



Recently the Government of Jamaica hosted a Town Hall Meeting for the 'Overarching Policy for Jamaica Protected Areas System Green Paper'. Enhancing the management of critical terrestrial areas will also benefit marine ecosystems, as the health of these ecosystems is closely linked to land-based activities and conditions.

- 4. As a part of the wider coral conservation approach, NEPA has submitted a 'Ministerial Order to Protect the Environment- Ban on Oxybenzone' is accepted this action would complement efforts to conserve corals.
- 5. National Ecosystem Restoration Plan (NERP)- The National Environment and Planning Agency is currently developing a NERP. The Plan will be a road map for the selection of restoration sites, best practice methodologies for restoration of various ecosystem types and the action and monitoring plans for the execution of the selected restoration activities at the target site. The overall objective of this plan is to promote and accelerate restoration of select degraded ecosystems, including in urban environments, as a contribution to reversing the loss of biodiversity, recovering connectivity, improving ecosystem resilience, enhancing the provision of ecosystem services, mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change. The plan will focus on Jamaica's terrestrial, in-land water, coastal and marine ecosystems.

D. The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN)

The production of future GCRMN reports, both at the regional and global level, relies on the ongoing support of data contributors who are willing to share their coral reef monitoring data for this purpose. As such, from 2024 to 2026, the GCRMN will undertake the rigorous process of developing the **Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2025** global report, including an extensive data collation process.

Do you have data to contribute to the upcoming GCRMN global report?

• Please provide the contact information for the data providers to allow for the GCRMN data collation team to request data and discuss the process of data contribution.

Please add further contacts as needed.

Answer:

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International Coral Reef Initiative

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E. Capacity Building & Communications

Have you found the ICRI #ForCoral Webinar Series useful?

Through 2024, ICRI has hosted multiple webinars that aim to share knowledge and foster collaboration across critical topics concerning the conservation, protection, and restoration of coral reefs. These webinars form the #ForCoral webinar series, and topics include the 4th Global Bleaching Event, impacts of land-based sources of pollution and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.

The full list of webinars and recordings can be found here: https://icriforum.org/forcoral-webinar-series/

• (ICRI) Did you attend any of the series' webinars, and if so which topics have you found the most useful and engaging? If you did not attend the webinars, please explain why, and how what we could have done better.

Answer:

The following webinars were attended by a representative from the National Environment and Planning Agency:

"The Impacts of land-Based Sources of Pollution on Coral Reefs". April 2024

"Integrating coral reefs into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans" May 2024

• (ICRI) Do you have any suggestions or request for topics that you wish for ICRI to host as part of this series? If you have a specific topic in mind, and would like to host a webinar, please indicate below.

Answer:

Cost-effective methodologies for assessing coral genetic diversity and lineage differentiation in marine protected areas.



Have you found the ICRI communications useful?

• (ICRI) Do you find the ICRI Monthly Round of News Useful? If yes, what do you like about it and how would you suggest improving ICRI's communications?

Answer:

Yes, the ICRI Monthly Round of News is found to be useful. The timely updates on global coral reef conservation efforts, along with the highlights of key initiatives and success stories from various regions, are particularly appreciated. The concise format and diverse content effectively keep stakeholders informed about relevant developments in the field. To further enhance ICRI's communications, incorporating more interactive elements such as a calendar-style layout or a visual timeline for upcoming events, deadlines, and key dates, making it easier for readers to plan and remember important information.

F. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

ICRI has continually supported the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Post-2020 process, developing a recommendation for coral reef indicators to be included in the Global Biodiversity Framework and supporting Parties during the negotiation process. Following the Framework's adoption in 2022, ICRI's support now aims to support parties in implementing the framework, especially through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPS) and the Marine and Coastal Work Programme.

In 2024, ICRI released <u>A Guide for Integrating Coral Reefs and Associated Ecosystems into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans</u> to support coral reef countries to integrate coral reefs and associated ecosystems into their NBSAPs.

• (ICRI) Did you use read, use, and/or apply the Guide on integrating coral reefs and associated ecosystems into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) useful? Where possible, indicate specific elements that were useful or alternatively provide information if you did not find the guide useful.

Answer:

The guidelines will be utilized to validate the recommendations being developed by the consultant preparing the GBF-aligned NBSAP.

• (ICRI) Did you revise your current National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP) to include coral reefs? *N.B.* if you are not a country representative, are you working with national focal points to help update their NBSAPs? Please provide further details.

Answer:

Jamaica's previous NBSAP incorporated coral reef and it envisioned that the new iteration of the document will do the same. The local outcome of the Kunming-Montreal



negotiations is the basis for the implementation of the GEF 7 "Post2020 Global Biodiversity Framework Early Action Support" (GBF-EAS) Project. The objective of this global project is to fast-track readiness and early actions to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework by providing financial and technical support to GEF-eligible Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in their work to align their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), including national biodiversity targets, monitoring, policy, and finance frameworks with the Global Biodiversity Framework of the CBD. Each of the participating countries, based on their current priorities, are using the grant to undertake activities that accelerate progress on achieving the Global Biodiversity Framework.

• (ICRI) How are you planning to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework? Please list the target(s) and decisions that your work attributes to.

Answer:

The initial step towards the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework will involve the completion of the GEF 7 GBF-EAS project.

The focus of the project is on identifying gaps and focus on the readiness of national teams, across four components:

- Component 1: Conduct a rapid review of the NBSAP and national targets to identify gaps required to align the
- national targets, goals, objectives and action plans within the existing NBSAP to the new GBF;
- Component 2: Assess existing monitoring systems to identify gaps and promote alignment between the NBSAP related monitoring system and the GBF;
- Component 3: Review policy alignment and coherence, including gaps and inconsistencies, against the GBF; and
- Component 4: Conduct biodiversity finance activities to accelerate preparedness for developing and/or implementing a finance plan for implementing a GBFaligned NBSAP.

The GEF7 GBF-EAS project will also develop a communication plan to building awareness of the Jamaica population about the Kunming-Montreal GBF.

Ongoing activities which directly support national targets on ecosystem conservation, restoration, and management set forth by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework include:



- 1. NEPA has initiated steps towards the preparation of a National Ecosystems Restoration Plan (NERP) which will serve as a road map for restoration works in terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems.
- 2. "A Jamaican Path from Hills to Ocean (H20)" project implemented by the Planning Institute of Jamaica, with the participation of the National Environment and Planning Agency and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining-Public Gardens Division and the Rural Agricultural Development Authority.
- 3. "CoralCarib: Pioneering a new strategic approach for conserving and restoring Caribbean coral reef ecosystems that targets Climate Resilient Refugia" project implemented by The Nature Conservancy and locally by the Alligator Head Foundation;
- 4. NEPA will be reviewing and updating the Action Plan for Corals and Reefs (APCAR) in 2024.

G. Upcoming events

Pl	ease tick the most any events that you will be, or are planning to attend:
	☐ September 10 th – 24 th : 79th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 79)
	☐ September 23 rd – 26 th : GEF International Waters Conference
	☐ October 13 th – 18 th : 7 th International Marine Conservation Congress (IMCC7)
	☑ October 21 st – November 1 st : CBD COP16
	\square November 4 th – 8 th : 77 th Annual meeting of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI77)
	\square December 10^{th} – 12^{th} : The International Mangrove Conservation and Restoration Conference
	☑ December 9 th – 13 th : Reef Futures
	☑ June 9 th – 13 th 2025: United Nations Ocean Conference
	☐ October 9 th – 15 th 2025: IUCN World Conservation Congress
	□ Other



Please list any upcoming regional / international events relevant to ICRI that your organisation plans to attend:

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- 1. Reef Futures 2024 symposium, 9 -13December, 2024, in Riviera Maya, Mexico.
- 2. CBD COP16, 1 November 2024
- 3. June 9th 13th 2025: United Nations Ocean Conference
- **H. Publications.** Please list relevant publications / reports you have released recently (+ add a link if possible)

Publication	URL

I. ICRI Member Feedback. What do you find most valuable about being a member of ICRI as well as completing the ICRI member reports? If you have any ideas to improve the Member Reports, please list below:

Answer:

Not applicable

J. Contact information & member information. (Note that this information will be posted on the ICRI website on your member page: https://icriforum.org/members/).

Please use the table below to provide us updates to your member's focal points as well as the blank cells to indicate changes to information (please add more rows, as needed):

Focal Point 1:					
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Focal Point 2:					
Name:	Chanel Raynor				



International Coral Reef Initiative

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Title/Organisation:	Coordinator - Ecosystems, Ecosystems		
	Management Branch, National Environment and		
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Focal Point 3:			
Name:			
Title/Organisation:			
Email:			
Member page updates:			
Section	Update		

Thank you very much for sharing your valuable experiences and information with ICRI. Members reports, meeting outputs and resources will be uploaded to: https://icriforum.org/events/37th-icri-general-meeting/