



GLOBAL FUND FOR
CORAL REEFS

ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT:

MAR+Invest

*Mesoamerican Reef (Mexico, Belize, Guatemala,
Honduras)*

January – December 2025

Programme Overview

Programme Title & Project Number	Programme Duration
<p>Programme Title: MAR+Invest: The Business Development and Finance Facility of the MAR</p> <p>Programme Number: 00130904</p> <p>Programme webpage: https://mar-invest.org/</p>	<p>Start Date: July 2022</p> <p>End Date: December 2030</p>
Programme Location	Co-recipient Organisation/s and Implementing Partners
<p>Country/ies: The Mesoamerican Reef –MAR–(Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico)</p> <p>Priority Coral Reef Site/s: 18 coastal and marine protected areas have been identified as priority sites within the 4 MAR countries.</p>	<p>Implementing Partner/s: MAR Fund, New Ventures (NV)/ Viwala, Healthy Reefs for Healthy People (HRHP), Sureste Sostenible (SS)/ Mexican Fund for the Conservation of Nature (FMCN)</p>
Total Approved Budget	
<p>Total GFCR Budget: US\$ 6,709,207</p> <p>MAR Fund: US\$ 1,314,046 (inception phase) and US\$ 5,008,250 (2 years of consolidation phase)</p> <p>UNCDF Blue Bridge: US\$ 386,911</p>	
Programme Description	
<p>MAR+Invest, the Business Development and Finance Facility of the Mesoamerican Reef (MAR), is a blended finance mechanism with strong monitoring and evaluation of impact, business acceleration, and a capacity building program that aims to enable conditions for a sustainable ocean-based economy with a positive contribution to the health and resilience of coral reefs and related ecosystems and communities of the MAR. The MAR has 1,260 km² of coral reefs associated with the coastlines of four countries, Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and Honduras, includes the longest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere and is home to 65 coral species, over 500 fish species and 300 mollusc species. It hosts 53 species listed under the IUCN Red List of threatened species, such as sea turtles, whale sharks, and staghorn and pillar corals. The MAR+Invest initiative selected 18 coastal and marine protected areas (CMPAs) as priority sites, representing 68,211 ha of coral. The initiative is led by the Mesoamerican Reef Fund (MAR Fund), with the following implementing partners: Healthy Reefs for Healthy People (HRHP), Sureste Sostenible, the Mexican Fund for the Conservation of Nature (FMCN), New Ventures, and Viwala. Its objective is to support reef-positive ventures by providing mentorship, business development and acceleration, and fostering enabling conditions for their growth. It also designs tailored financial products and aims to mobilize US\$ 33M in private commercial capital for the MAR region. Additionally, it supports research and development and feasibility of initiatives, such as studies on King Crab mariculture, blue carbon and biodiversity credits, and sargassum management to further enhance sustainable economic opportunities in the region, while addressing key drivers of reef degradation. For example, the market study on wastewater treatment opportunities in the MAR, has indicated the market size to be approximately US\$ 50M. These results inform the MAR+Invest Clean Water Fund design to improve water quality, aiming to make measurable improvements for the 1,260 km² of reef.</p>	
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GLOBAL FUND FOR CORAL REEFS

I. Executive Summary

1. Programme Progress Update

In 2025, MAR+Invest advanced its mission to mitigate local drivers of coral reef degradation by identifying and supporting a pipeline of reef-positive ventures. The program mobilized an additional US\$ 1,280,000 in private capital for its portfolio, bringing the total capital secured since inception to US\$ 6,153,818 (as of 31 December 2025).

The program continued to implement its core components—MARTAF, the Acceleration Program (AP), Build & Connect (B&C), Transactional Services (TS), and Blended Finance—to strengthen the reef-positive economy. This included four consultancies, direct acceleration support for 21 ventures, financial assistance for 12 companies, and leadership capacity-building for 15 individuals which enabled the development of 14 public policy proposals with the potential to benefit the MAR if accepted.

To enhance community resilience and livelihoods, MAR+Invest designed innovative financial mechanisms aimed at supporting small-scale fishers in Honduras and the program, “Women for the MAR”, was launched to support early-stage women-led initiatives, mapping more than 60 ventures and providing direct support to 13 across the four MAR countries. Finally, it designed the concept for a new fund, the Clean Water Fund, to finance technologies that tackle the lack of proper wastewater treatment in the hospitality and construction sector, one of the biggest threats to the MAR.

2. Milestones and Adaptations

Key portfolio milestones achieved in 2025 are the following:

- Two blended finance loans were deployed to improve water quality for the MAR: US\$ 100,000 to Terminator Water Solutions (TWS), and US\$ 25,000 to Hotel Chiringuito, which were also de-risked by the MAR+Invest Guarantee Fund.
- Two small grants were approved to ventures and are being deployed, one for a venture of the Acceleration Program of 2024 and another for the Build & Connect cohort of 2023, both linked to water quality. Activities are still on-going.
- The consultancy to optimize water use in sargassum upcycling, in collaboration with Carbonwave was launched. The company Water Offsets has designed the system which will be piloted in Carbonwave facilities in Q1 2026, aiming to reduce the amount of fresh water consumed in sargassum upcycling, thereby lessening the pressure on fragile aquifers and preventing further contamination.
- The 2nd cohort of the Acceleration Program was completed with 7 ventures and the 3rd cohort was successfully launched, with an initial Bootcamp to support 14 early-stage ventures, and now 8 of these are being supported in the acceleration phase, which will finalize in April 2026.
- The 2025 Build & Connect cohort was successfully launched and completed, with 15 leaders selected from the MAR who received tailored mentorship on advocacy, risk mitigation, and technical review to develop public policy proposals. The proposals were designed to address systemic barriers in the MAR to support businesses and ventures with positive impact (BVPI) and private capital mobilization. They designed policies related to fisheries, restoration, wastewater treatment, and tax incentives for sustainable businesses, among others. One of the proposals, on the incorporation of specific objectives, actions, and indicators for conservation of mangroves, seagrasses, and coral reefs, has been accepted into Mexico’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).



- The financial product for the small-scale fishing sector in Honduras was designed, including two de-risking tools: parametric insurance and the guarantee fund. Financial inclusion of small-scale fishers provides them with the option of working capital to improve their fishing gear and their boats, to purchase an icebox and other key elements required for safe and more effective and sustainable fishing practices, which ultimately positively impact coral reefs. By engaging fishers through the financial product, we will establish a relation that will begin by requesting key, currently unavailable information on their fishing effort and income. With sustained engagement, we will be able to determine improvements in income and follow up on their fishing practices.
- The Caribbean King Crab reproduction life-cycle was completed, and new vertical production systems are being implemented to optimize production. The Business Plan consultancy was launched.
- The 2025 Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment (AGRRA) monitoring in 313 sites of the MAR was completed by Healthy Reefs and Healthy People (HRHP) and its partners.
- The feasibility study on blue carbon and biodiversity credits in the MAR was completed.
- The consultancy to map wastewater treatment solutions and provide recommendations to design blended finance products for the hospitality and construction sector was carried out.
- TS mobilized US\$ 1,280,000 in private capital for 4 companies of the portfolio: TWS, Hotel Chiringuito, BioPlaster, and Carbonwave.
- The Women for the MAR, initiated in 2023 with support from the Summit Foundation, has so far mapped 60 women-led groups across the MAR, building a growing pipeline of early-stage, rural initiatives. Direct support began in 2024 with three groups, mobilizing US\$ 25,000 in seed capital and in 2025, a Project Officer was recruited to implement the initiative and 13 ventures received tailored accompaniment to strengthen business models, advance formalization, and integrate gender and environmental considerations. In December 2025, a regional exchange was organized that brought together 13 women entrepreneurs from the MAR to share experiences and build foundations of a regional community of practice. Additionally, US\$ 300k was successfully mobilized from the Resilient Futures Fund (RFF) to design and carry-out an acceleration program dedicated to women-led ventures, which also includes small grants to strengthen selected initiatives. This program was named HER OCEAN.
- The draft of the 2026 replenishment proposal was finalized and submitted to GFCR.
- To date, MAR+Invest has supported a cumulative total of 1,269 jobs and over 9,300 direct beneficiaries.

In addition to the portfolio milestones achieved, in February 2025, the MAR+Invest team organized a one-week visit to Quintana Roo and northern Belize for the UK DEFRA and GFCR teams (other donors and partners also joined). The visit included detailed presentations about the initiative components, meetings with project implementers and entrepreneurs, as well as project implementation site visits.

Securing new reef-positive companies with investment capacity has been the main challenge for the initiative this year. The reduced number of mature ventures that fit investor requirements has hindered the pace of capital mobilization for the MAR region (our target was to mobilize US\$ 4.5M). This trend was also reflected in the lower number of applicants to the 3rd Acceleration Program call for proposals, as well as in the increasingly early-stage profile of those applying, highlighting the nascent ecosystem in the region and the time required for growth to mature stages.

In response, the initiative has adapted its strategy. It has created a new Bootcamp prior to the AP to support more early-stage ventures. This approach aims to strengthen the pipeline and provide critical



early-stage support, preparing these companies to later access other initiative services, such as funding. TS will broaden its role beyond investment readiness to include financial readiness as a foundational step in accompanying ventures.

To ensure the initiative effectively addresses key threats to the MAR, an important part of the resources and efforts are now directed toward identifying solutions for wastewater treatment and designing targeted financial products. This includes establishing an impact-linked fund (the Clean Water Fund) to support wastewater treatment solutions in the region's hotel and construction sectors, thereby scaling long-term positive impact for the reef and its coastal communities.

Due to budget constraints and ongoing fundraising difficulties—exacerbated by global financing challenges, mainly due to the current geopolitical shifts —MAR+Invest has established priorities in its current and future work plans. These prioritizations (detailed in the MAR+Invest 2026 replenishment document, [Annex 1](#)) will ensure operational continuity until the relation with GFCR concludes in 2030. The focus will shift toward deepening support for already-supported ventures and individuals, by reducing one cohort of the AP and one of the B&C, and concentrating resources on high-impact sectors such as the hospitality and construction industry. Based on findings to date, financial products under the Clean Water Fund are not expected to be fully standardized across the MAR countries, but rather adapted to each market's context. Preliminary analysis suggests that Mexico may allow for more structured and scalable financing solutions, given its higher levels of real estate investment, stricter environmental regulations, and stronger institutional participation. In contrast, in countries such as Honduras and Belize, where markets are smaller and more fragmented, with more limited regulatory enforcement and infrastructure capacity, there appears to be a need for more flexible, simplified approaches, potentially including decentralized, modular, or community-based solutions. These early findings indicate that financial product design will likely need to respond to country-specific regulatory, market, and operational conditions, rather than follow a fully standardized regional model.

3. 2026 Outlook

The main objectives and priorities for 2026 are:

- Finalize the operational structure of the Clean Water Fund, led by Viwala, and secure 5 more pilots on wastewater treatment. Fundraise for the fund, foreseen to go beyond 2030.
- Finalize the third Acceleration Program and launch the call for proposals for the fourth cohort, focused on the hospitality and construction sector. The program aims to strengthen technical capacities and management skills as well as environmental knowledge, enabling businesses to access financing options—for example for wastewater treatment plants—that support the adoption of sustainable practices that reduce threats to reef health, such as contaminating effluents into the sea.
- Launch an additional Acceleration Program focused on and tailored to women-led environment positive ventures, funded by the RFF.
- Initiate the pilot of the small-scale fisher financial product in Honduras, to provide access to working capital for improved fishing gear, boats, ice boxes and other essentials that enable safer, more effective and sustainable fishing practices. These improved conditions and financial standing support fishers move beyond survival-mode fishing and enable adoptions of more sustainable fishing practices.
- Launch the Community of Learning and Practice for all MAR+Invest alumni (entrepreneurs and leaders that received support from the initiative).

- Carry-out the second and third consultancies in collaboration with Carbonwave: Sargassum disposal and landfill study and offshore collection study. Both studies aim to improve the environmental and social crisis linked to massive sargassum arrival in the MAR coast.
- Continue to support the coastal and marine protected areas managers and co-managers upload their financial information to MARFin. Assessing the financial gap per CMPA will enable managers to better understand their needs, optimize use of existing funds, and strategically pursue additional financing opportunities—ultimately strengthening effective management.
- Design a blue carbon project in Mexico for mangroves based on the results of the feasibility study.
- Mobilize US\$ 6M in private capital.

The main deliverables for the first half of 2026 are:

- Finalize the King Crab Business Plan for business operations in Mexico, Belize and Honduras.
- Finalize the installation and testing of the water treatment system in Carbonwave in Mexico.
- Finalize the 2026 replenishment proposal and carry-out the GFCR mid-program performance evaluation.

II. Programme Progress Overview

1. Progress Toward Outcomes and Outputs

In 2025, MAR+Invest continued its consolidation phase, making progress toward its objectives. This progress underscores MAR+Invest’s ongoing commitment to building a resilient blue economy for the MAR region and creating lasting positive impact.

1) **Outcome 1:** Generation of coral positive market-based solutions for CMPA in the MAR

Please note that the advances of the small grants, Acceleration Program, Transactional Services, and Blended Finance apply to both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2, as the specific outcome will depend on the nature of the Solution within the portfolio.

In 2025, MAR+Invest continued its efforts to support market-based, coral-positive solutions for coastal and marine protected areas (CMPAs) in the MAR. New Ventures finalized the second cohort of the Acceleration Program (AP) with 7 ventures and launched the third cohort with an initial Bootcamp, providing support to 14 new ventures, bringing the total of AP ventures supported since program inception to 29.

The 8 ventures selected for the third AP (which first participated in the Bootcamp) are listed in the Table 1 below, with the associated CMPA noted, where applicable, and the business description and progress in the program:

Table 1: Ventures in the 3rd Acceleration Program, related CMPA, business description and workplan in the program

Related CMPA	Business description	Acceleration Workplan
Alak / Ecologicistic, Mexico		
Arrecifes de Cozumel National Park, Mexico	Waste collection services for restaurants and hotels in	They have worked on refining their commercial model,

	Bacalar, and being launched in Cozumel, where they sort and revalorize materials such as cardboard, plastic, and glass, and transform organic waste into fertilizer. They also train businesses to reduce and manage their own waste streams.	developing a sales funnel, identifying their break-even point, strengthening their sales pitch, and defining their ideal customer profile.
#Tide México - H2Ola		
Arrecifes de Cozumel National Park, Mexico	They install free water stations in high-traffic locations and generate revenue by selling advertising space, which in turn finances the recovery of marine plastic and ocean-bound plastic before it reaches the ocean and its transformation into circular products such as clothing and water bottles.	During the acceleration, they focused on strengthening their business and marketing models, as well as developing their financial model and receiving financial advisory support to prepare for fundraising. During the acceleration, they launched their first pilot in the International Airport in Mexico City.
ASH Limited, Belize		
CMPAs in Belize	They develop cosmetic products based on aloe vera and rosemary, with their main product being a reef-safe sunscreen. Their operations cover the entire value chain, from organic cultivation of raw materials to processing and commercialization.	They worked on refining their business model, strengthening their commercial strategy, enhancing their value proposition, and developing both their team structure and go-to-market approach.
Corua, Mexico		
CMPAs in Quintana Roo, Mexico	They produce a mineral sunscreen free of toxic chemicals, designed to be safe for both human health and the environment.	They worked on their financial and business models, ultimately pivoting to strengthen their value proposition for the B2B segment, particularly targeting hotels to help reduce the environmental impact of mass tourism. During the acceleration program, they attended the

		Latin American Impact Investment Forum (FLII), where they initiated conversations with the President of the Cozumel Hotel Association.
Río Wildlife, Guatemala		
Rio Dulce National Park, Guatemala	They offer biodiversity-focused tourism experiences that support community initiatives.	During the incubation process, they worked on defining and strengthening their business model, pricing strategy, and overall value proposition. They also successfully secured funding to acquire a boat that will support their expedition activities.
Reservaciones La Ceiba, Honduras		
Pico Bonito, Nombre de Dios, Cayos Cochinos, and Río Cangrejal, Honduras	This is the business arm of the NGO LARECOTURH, which works with communities to develop and strengthen tourism products that are then offered to the public through Reservaciones La Ceiba.	During the program, they worked on their commercial model, customer acquisition strategy, and reservation process. They initiated a partnership with a local university in Honduras, where students will contribute to improving their website as part of their social service program.
Water Offsets Ltd, UK		
CMPAs in Quintana Roo, Mexico	<p>A UK-based company focused on wastewater circularity for both residential and industrial sectors.</p> <p>This company is also carrying out a pilot project in collaboration with Carbonwave and supported by MAR+Invest.</p>	During the acceleration, they worked on their market entry strategy for Mexico and the broader Mesoamerican Reef (MAR) region.
Saving Our Sharks / Kab Xok cooperative, Mexico		
Costa Occidental de Isla Mujeres, Punta Cancún y Punta Nizuc National Park, Mexico.	A cooperative of former shark fishers who now focus on shark conservation and offer shark swimming tourism experiences	During the program, they worked on their commercial strategy to attract customers, including identifying sales

	as an alternative livelihood.	channels and building strategic partnerships.
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Ventures which only participated in the Bootcamp:

- Del Puerto al Huerto, Mexico
- Caribbean Reef Guardians - Bay Islands Marine Park, Honduras
- Fundación Faro Nautilus, Mexico
- Ocean World Of Sound (WOS), Mexico
- Sea2Carbon, UK
- MAR Wisdom Center (CEMARIN) - Punta de Manabique Wildlife Refuge and Río Sarstún, Multiple-Use Area, Guatemala.

During this period, Transactional Services (TS) continued providing financial analysis, advisory support, and individual assistance to 12 companies or organizations with business arms: TWS, Hotel Chiringuito, EAWD, River Impact, FUNDAECO, Thalasso, The Seas We Love, Reefy, Bioplaster, Maritime Procurement Service, Wildflow AI and Carbonwave. Concurrently, Viwala conducted in-depth analyses of 7 companies and deployed 2 blended finance loans. Both loans are financing solutions related to wastewater treatment to improve water quality in Quintana Roo, a direct threat to MAR. Finally, the two small grants deployed for the portfolio are also linked to water quality in Mexico and Honduras. More details about the AP, TS and Blended finance portfolio can be found in the **Solutions** section.

Additional training sessions were conducted for MARFin, an online platform designed for CMPAs to analyze their operating budgets, create projections, and identify funding gaps. This training engaged 17 managers and co-managers from 7 CMPAs across the MAR, and we are working with them to input their financial data in order to develop the financial gap analysis.

In 2025, the project implemented by GOAL and complemented by BRIDGE was completed. It focused on strengthening capacities of small-scale fishers (SSF) in Honduras, who are vital to maintaining both healthy marine ecosystems and thriving coastal communities. The project built critical capacity within 22 coastal fishing communities, training 945 individuals in sustainable fishing practices, business management, management of marine resources and ecotourism. As a result, 367 fishers have now adopted at least one additional sustainable practice (either use of legal fishing gear or intentional avoidance of reef-damaging trawl anchors), directly reducing overfishing pressure and contributing to the health of fisheries and coral reefs. With environmental baselines established since 2023 across several sites within the GOAL activity areas, monitoring efforts over time are expected to capture positive impacts on commercial fish biomass—an indicator that, while requiring time for recovery, can demonstrate the tangible ecological benefits of reduced fishing pressure if fishers adopt sustainable practices. The initiative also strengthened the commercial viability of fishing associations by developing business profiles and securing new supply agreements with local businesses. Furthermore, the design of innovative financial products was finalized: a parametric insurance model, designed by WTW, which aims to protect fishers' income during extreme weather, and an integrated loan and guarantee scheme, designed by Viwala, which reduce the risk of the sector to make it more attractive to financial institutions. This systemic approach links community financial security and inclusion with sustainable resource management, which may create a scalable model for improving fisheries health and reinforcing the resilience of the broader reef ecosystem and CMPAs. MAR+Invest continues to lead conversations with local actors to participate in the pilot. More details of this project can be found in the **Solutions** section.



- 2) **Outcome 2:** Livelihoods of coral-reef dependent communities are MAR positive with increased resilience to climate change

In 2025, Healthy Reefs for Healthy People (HRHP) made significant progress in advancing the King Crab mariculture. Some of the key achievements include:

- A nutrient-rich feed which was introduced in late 2024, which dramatically improved juvenile survival rates, increasing from less than 1% to over 8%.
- To combat cannibalism, Individual Vertical Systems (IVS) of production were introduced. These innovative stacked tanks were piloted and improved feeding efficiency and space use. The final data showed crabs in IVS grew 32% faster than in traditional shared tanks.
- The project advanced in Belize (relocated to Sapodilla Cayes) and Honduras (Cayos Cochinos), where funding from MAR Fund and the local partner Fundación Cayos Cochinos was secured to repair labs and expand operations in 2026.

A consultant was hired in May 2025 to develop the Business Plan for the King Crab mariculture, with different operations and models evaluated in Mexico, Belize and Honduras. More details of this project can be found in the **Solutions** section.

Sureste Sostenible (SS), which leads the Build & Connect program within MAR+Invest, provided continued mentoring to four market initiatives from the 2023 cohort and successfully launched and completed the second cohort, engaging 15 leaders to design public policy proposals addressing key barriers to mobilizing private capital in the MAR. SS will continue supporting both the 2023 and 2025 cohorts through a Community of Learning and Practice. Please refer to the **Enabling Environment** section for more details.

The lack of wastewater treatment and the accumulation of sargassum are critical issues that threaten the reef ecosystem and the livelihoods of the coastal communities that depend on it. Recognizing this urgency, MAR+Invest has taken targeted action through innovative approaches and strategic partnerships:

- To tackle wastewater pollution, MAR+Invest commissioned a study to evaluate the market size and appetite for wastewater treatment funding, identifying potential clients in the hospitality and construction sector and companies providing wastewater treatment solutions in Mexico and Honduras, while also exploring opportunities in Belize. It also pinpointed opportunities for catalytic funding to strengthen the sector. The consultancy began in March 2025 and the final report is being finalized. More details are available in [Annex B](#) and the **Solutions** section.
- To address sargassum arrival and accumulation, a challenge exacerbated by rising ocean temperatures and nutrient pollution, MAR+Invest, in collaboration with Carbonwave and the GFCR Equity Fund, launched a consultancy to optimize and reduce water consumption in Carbonwave's sargassum upcycling process prior to scaling. Water Offsets was selected to carry out this work, which began in March 2025 and is currently underway. The two other studies related to sargassum and Carbonwave also advanced in 2025. See details in [Annex B](#).

Throughout 2025, MAR+Invest continued its fundraising efforts, searching for and applying to open calls for proposals (e.g., Resilient Futures Fund, IKI - UNESCO, GEF - Caribbean Blue Economy (GBFF, Global Biodiversity Framework Fund), Outcomes Accelerator (CH, UK), Climate Finance Lab, OCEAN - UK DEFRA, Convergence). The proposal to the Resilient Futures Fund was approved in December 2025. It will allow for the deployment of one additional and complementary Acceleration Program to support eight



women-led ventures in the MAR that focus on climate change adaptation and will also provide small grants to strengthen selected initiatives. The program has been named HER OCEAN.

In 2025, MAR Fund and partners raised US\$ 523,623 in matching funds and contributed US\$ 77,499 in-kind to support the development of the Blue Economy in the MAR.

3) **Outcome 3:** MAR Emergency Fund effectively responds to major shocks

To date, no progress has been made on developing the Emergency Fund Action Plan, as its implementation depends largely on loans to large, established companies that could contribute to the fund. However, the loans facilitated under MAR+Invest to date have been relatively small, with a high concessional funding ratio, and have targeted ventures at a stage where benefit-sharing mechanisms are not yet viable. The Emergency Fund (EF) is a financial mechanism established by MAR Fund through the Reef Rescue Initiative (RRI) to provide rapid funding in response to coral reef damage caused by natural disasters or anthropogenic activities. In 2025, there were no disbursements made and as of the end of the year, the fund held US\$ 433,977.62. It is capitalized annually with US\$ 30,000 from the revenue of the RRI endowment, generously donated by the German Cooperation through the KfW. The EF supports emergency response across the MAR region by collaborating with national and local partners to mitigate damage and ensure timely intervention. Managed by MAR Fund through the EF Coordinating Committee (EFCC), from 2026 the fund can disburse up to US\$35,000 per emergency for activities such as rapid damage assessments, coral rescue and stabilization, equipment purchases, and support for emergency response brigades.

A grant agreement was signed with the Mexican Carbon Program (PMC) to carry out the feasibility study on Blue Carbon and Biodiversity credits in the MAR region in partnership with the Center for Research and Advanced Studies (CINVESTAV), The Ocean Foundation, and IDOM. The study was carried out from January to December 2025. See results in the **Solutions** section.

2. Grants, Investment, and Revenue Mobilised

1) Grants and Investments:

During 2025, Transactional Services added 37 new contacts to the pipeline and maintained a total active pipeline of 12 companies as of December 2025. This year, TS mobilized US\$ 1,280,000 in private capital, bringing the initiative's cumulative leverage to US\$ 6,153,818 to date. The investments mobilized in 2025 totaled US\$ 1,280,000 across four companies: Carbonwave, BioPlaster, TWS and Hotel Chiringuito. The sector attracting the most capital are tech companies developing solutions addressing the sargassum crisis.

Viwala deployed two concessional loans using a blended finance approach. These loans leveraged the MAR+Invest Guarantee Fund and GFCR concessional funding to mobilize private capital from investors:

- TWS: in January 2025, a US\$ 100,000 loan was approved, of which US\$ 30,000 came from private investment and US\$ 70,000 from GFCR concessional resources. The guarantee fund was leveraged for the private capital.
- Hotel Chiringuito: in July 2025, a US\$ 25,000 loan was approved, of which US\$ 10,000 came from private investment and US\$ 15,000 from GFCR concessional resources. The guarantee fund was leveraged for the private capital.



Furthering its objective to strengthen early-stage reef-positive ventures, MAR+Invest approved two small grants. Following a direct call for proposals issued to the B&C 2023 cohort and the AP 2023 and 2024 cohorts in May 2025, two ventures were selected to each receive a 12-month US\$ 20,000 small grant:

- BICA Lab: The Bay Islands Conservation Association (BICA) is a co-manager and protects the natural resources of the Bay Islands in Honduras through environmental education, community development, and research. Operating chapters in Utila, Roatán, and Guanaja, BICA collaborates with the Institute of Forestry Conservation and Wildlife on protected area management. In Roatán, it established a laboratory to test water samples, enabling the hotel industry and other sectors to comply with environmental regulations. BICA participated in the 2023 Build & Connect program to develop this laboratory into a sustainable financing mechanism for protected area management. The US\$ 20k grant was approved to support the venture’s development. This funding will cover consultancies to define the optimal operational structure and required permits, as well as to design a comprehensive business plan.
- HAWA: In 2024, the Mexican NGO Escuela Itinerante del Agua y Artes participated in the Acceleration Program. This social enterprise treats wastewater in rural areas using biofiltering gardens, reducing pollution and improving water treatment to benefit environmental health. As a direct outcome of the program, the NGO created a business arm called HAWA to commercialize these biofiltering gardens. The approved US\$ 20k grant will support the venture by funding the development of a mold for the biofilters, the production of an initial 20 units, and promotional activities to socialize wastewater treatment solutions in coastal communities in Quintana Roo.

Women for the MAR is a crucial initiative that addresses a significant gap in the region by providing direct support to coastal, community women-led ventures—a sector that traditionally lacks funding and institutional backing. Since 2023, the program has built a pipeline of over 60 early-stage initiatives across the four countries of the Mesoamerican Reef, with direct financial support scaling rapidly. Starting with US\$ 25,000 for three groups in 2024, the program invested a total of US\$ 66,394 in 2025 to support 13 ventures, providing seed capital, tailored business training, and a regional exchange. These investments have yielded concrete results: 94 women, across 37 different communities, from ages 18 to 72 and with participation of women from Indigenous and Afro-descent communities and women with disabilities, have strengthened their skills in different topics such as Business Models Canvas, basic financial management, tax compliance, visual identity and basic marketing. By targeting the specific barriers rural women face—such as limited access to finance, markets, and decision-making spaces—Women for the MAR is not only filling a critical support void but also building economic autonomy and community resilience across the region.

2) Revenue and Sustainability:

The companies that have received a loan from MAR+Invest (TWS and Hotel Chiringuito) are on track with their repayment schedules, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the initiative’s concessional funding:

- TWS has successfully sold 4 WOMBATS to one customer in Cancun,
- Hotel Chiringuito purchased and installed a wastewater treatment plant (from the company Trimmor) allowing them to reduce operational costs linked to wastewater disposal.

To date, no other loans with GFCR funding have been deployed thus no additional revenue streams have been generated.

Considering also the wider portfolio (including the capital mobilization from TS), consolidated revenues reached US\$ 21.7M by the end of 2025 (some revenues are estimates) for the following companies: Carbonwave, Maritime Procurement Services (MPS), Hotel Chiringuito, Royal Mayan Shrimp Farms and TWS.

The companies in our portfolio are showing strong and efficient financial growth. For every dollar invested, they are generating about US\$ 2.10 in revenue, indicating a healthy return. Revenue across the portfolio grew significantly, from US\$ 9.6M in 2023 to US\$ 21.7M in 2025—more than doubling in just two years. This represents an average annual growth rate of over 50%. The strongest and steadiest growth is coming from companies that received loans from Viwala. Carbonwave however, is in a temporary consolidation phase, which is common for businesses at its stage of growth. While its revenue has dipped slightly in the short term, this position is important for capturing significant future value and long-term potential.

In summary, the portfolio is strategically balanced: the loans are delivering short-term returns and stability, while the equity investments secure valuable long-term opportunities for growth.

Aligned with MAR+Invest's sustainability strategy and to address one of the primary threats to the MAR, the design of the Clean Water Fund has been initiated. This fund aims to attract capital for solutions targeting untreated and poorly treated wastewater for the hospitality and construction sectors across the region.

3. Implementation Challenges and Lessons Learned

In the first half of the consolidation phase, MAR+Invest swiftly operationalized its de-risking strategy to deploy two blended finance loans addressing a critical threat to the MAR: water pollution. This demonstrates our commitment to designing and operating innovative financial solutions in sectors often overlooked due to a lack of tailored financing and the absence or weak enforcement of environmental regulations. Some key challenges throughout the year which impacted implementation include:

- **Pipeline development and venture maturity:** The pool of more mature reef-positive ventures is small, as evidenced by this year's Acceleration Program call for proposals and cohort and pipeline scouting efforts. Proposals received were at a much earlier development stage than in previous years, indicating that many of the more mature companies identified have already engaged with the initiative and that new strategies are required to identify other opportunities. In response, MAR+Invest introduced a bootcamp with foundational workshops specifically designed to address early-stage needs. This is compounded by pipeline attrition: over half of contacted ventures are unresponsive or drop out, primarily due to being too early-stage to navigate the required administrative processes and demonstrate traction. TS has been exploring new strategies to improve response rates (favouring partner introductions instead of cold intros, calls for referrals).
- **Capital & financial readiness gap:** Most ventures require extensive pre-investment support and patient, catalytic capital long before they meet traditional investor readiness criteria. TS is broadening its scope by offering "financial readiness" support prior to investment support. This will also be addressed in the Community of Learning and Practise that will be created in the next phase, to continue supporting and strengthening the identified pipeline.
- **Business Model development:** Most ventures require significant work to clarify their value propositions, define customer segments, and refine their business models. While this represents a core challenge, it is also a key area where the program can deliver substantial impact. A

recurring pattern is that many ventures—often originating from scientific or NGO backgrounds—lack basic financial management systems. This gap in financial readiness currently limits their eligibility for investment services, underscoring the need for foundational support. On the other hand, there are operational businesses in the region that are not aware of their (potential) negative impact on the reef and its resources. In response, the next acceleration cohort will focus on more established businesses that may require support to develop their impact narrative, and that have shown interest and potential to transition their operations toward more sustainable practices and to reduce their environmental footprint. In parallel, the Clean Water Fund will offer financing opportunities in the hospitality sector to install or upgrade wastewater treatment plants, adopt improved water treatment technologies, or increase efficiencies across their value chains to reduce water pollution and protect coastal ecosystems.

- Regional disparities: Entrepreneurial ecosystems outside Mexico (notably in Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras) have fewer support structures, slowing venture development but underscoring MAR+Invest's catalytic role in addressing regional disparities.
- Investor misalignment: Investor preference is skewed toward scalable tech models and revenue-generating companies, sidelining high impact non-tech or early-stage solutions critical for reef health. This bias has favoured companies such as BioPlaster, but makes it more challenging for others. Early discussions with local banks, such as FIRA, Banco de Guatemala, BBVA Spark, Devela Capital, and IDC Impact, and others, have highlighted this challenge. They require companies to be already profitable, which is still a limitation in the portfolio.
- Market and technical gaps: Identifying and securing consultants with the specific technical expertise required in the region remains challenging, causing delays in some project activities. For example, encountering validated, small-scale wastewater treatment technologies is challenging and a lack of local field capacity to build trust with hoteliers hinder adoption of the financial products offered by MAR+Invest. Viwala has hired a dedicated commercial lead to socialize the products and wastewater treatment opportunities in Quintana Roo as a first step to fill this gap before expanding to other MAR countries.
- External pressures: Shifts in the geopolitical landscape have reduced the availability of catalytic funding and intensified competition. Concurrently, rising operational costs (e.g., fuel, equipment) are making field activities more expensive to perform. The budget reduction will impact implementation. The 2026 replenishment proposal outlines activity prioritization and fund reorganization to ensure operations continue through 2030, employing innovative solutions to maintain key objectives.

4. Emerging Risks

The geopolitical landscape shifted significantly in 2025. Among other impacts, there has been a reduction in key development aid programs, affecting partner organizations, global logistics, and market prices, while potentially straining international collaborations. A potential outcome is that it may accelerate a global pivot away from development spending and toward defense. This would pose a direct and severe challenge to traditional conservation and climate fundraising efforts, a trend already emerging in several countries. Consequently, this underscores the critical need to deepen engagement with the private sector and design innovative mechanisms that leverage private capital and networks to advance conservation goals.

III. Solutions

1. Overview of Progress and Composition of Solution Portfolio

Portfolio overview

The MAR+Invest portfolio has expanded over the past year through the identification of new reef-positive ventures and companies, and service providers in the wastewater treatment sector. Eight ventures are currently in the third AP, which will conclude in April 2026. Since program inception, a total of 29 ventures have been engaged—23 through acceleration (pending the third cohort’s completion) and 6 through bootcamp training. The TS portfolio added 37 new ventures under evaluation and provided direct support to 12 companies throughout the year (Table 2). Among these, four have raised private capital, with two receiving blended loans with concessional funding via Viwala. Additionally, of the new ventures in the pipeline receiving acceleration or financial support, eight are women-led.

Table 2: Transactional Services active pipeline in 2025

Venture	Country	Sector	Drivers of degradation addressed	Staff size	Year founded
Arc Marine	Other	Ocean-based solutions	Ecosystem degradation	30	2015
Branch Foundation	Other	Ocean-based solutions	Ecosystem degradation	12	2024
The Seas We Love	Mexico	Circular economy	Sargassum	2	2022
EAWD	Mexico	Renewable energy	Water pollution	5	2024
Fundaeeco	Guatemala	Hospitality / conservation	Mass tourism	90	1990
River Impact	Guatemala	Waste management	Plastic pollution	12	2023
Hotel Chiriquito	Mexico	Hospitality	Water pollution	30	2015
SOS Carbon	Mexico	Circular economy	Sargassum	100	2020
Parley for the Oceans México	Mexico	Waste management	Plastic pollution	5	2022
Grupo Promesa	Mexico	Waste management	Plastic pollution	80	2009

Reefy	Mexico	Ocean-based solutions	Ecosystem degradation	15	2019
Inversa Leathers	Mexico	Sustainable materials	Invasive species	18	2020

*See details of 37 identified companies in [Annex 2](#).

The portfolio shows opportunities in waste management and Circular Economy, as well as in small-scale ecotourism ventures, reflecting both regional challenges and opportunities within this high-tourism area. Examples include Mexico Circula, #Tide Mexico, Ecologicist, FUNDAECO, Saving our Sharks, and Reservaciones La Ceiba.

In the Women for the MAR initiative, the supported ventures include sustainable fisheries practices, community-based tourism, waste reduction, and circular use of materials, helping to reduce local pressures on marine and coastal ecosystems while strengthening the adaptive capacity of reef-dependent communities. These ventures are still small, for example earning less than US\$ 50k/year, lacking corporate structure or clients, however they strongly align with MAR+Invest’s objectives and sectors of interest. Through Women for the MAR, we aim to address key constraints faced by women in coastal communities, including limited access to finance, business services and markets, barriers to formalization, restricted participation in local economic and decision-making spaces, and challenges related to care responsibilities, mobility, and geographic isolation. The initiative responds through seed capital, tailored technical accompaniment, and access to practical training and peer exchange. By supporting women to develop, formalize, and stabilize their income-generating activities, it aims to strengthen their economic autonomy and improve household capacity to invest in health, education, and risk reduction.

During the first half of the consolidation phase, we strategically allocated more resources to mapping and designing financial products for solutions addressing wastewater treatment and small-scale fisher financial inclusion. Following this decision, we have seen portfolio growth in wastewater treatment—including ventures in acceleration, bootcamp, and blended finance such as TWS, HAWA, BICA Lab, Hotel Chiringuito, Water Offsets, and the Polo’s Water Association, to name a few. This focus aligns with the initiative’s strategic direction outlined during the 2024 replenishment as well as our commitment to continue strengthening and growing our portfolio. Regarding small-scale fisheries, we are defining next steps for the pilot in Honduras aimed at improving fishers’ financial security while building capacity for sustainable practices. GOAL will engage with eight fishing associations to purchase parametric insurance and acquire loans, while Viwala will engage with an intermediary financial institution partner to provide the loans directly to the associations. Throughout this process, financial data will be closely monitored, enabling Viwala to evaluate and adapt the product over time to ensure it remains responsive to fishers' needs.

Additionally, four consultancies were initiated or completed (additional details and links to documents can be found in Annex B):

- 1) Developing a wastewater treatment setup and pilot for the sargassum upcycling industry.

- 2) Wastewater market. This consultancy mapped wastewater solutions in the MAR, evaluated the potential of the market for the hospitality and construction sectors and defined blended finance products for the sector. The final report is under revision, and the main findings are listed below:
 - a) Quintana Roo represents the strongest entry point for blended wastewater treatment finance in the MAR region. The concentration of mid- and large-sized hotels, stronger regulatory enforcement, higher levels of corporate compliance, persistent sanitation gaps in high-growth areas, and mid- to high-income households, together create clear, investment-ready demand.
 - b) The most attractive opportunity lies in mid-sized expansion projects. While large developments typically finance wastewater systems within conventional capital structures, mid-sized operators face financing constraints despite viable operations and clear environmental benefits.
 - c) In coastal, low-density areas of Belize, Honduras, and Mexico, the private wastewater treatment market remains underdeveloped due to small project sizes, limited regulatory enforcement, and a lack of affordable, easy-to-deploy solutions. Yet small and mid-sized buildings generate a significant share of wastewater, and centralized systems are unlikely in the near term, creating a clear long-term opportunity

The information gathered through the consultancy is being used by Viwala to structure the Clean Water Fund's pitch, as they integrate the strategic narrative and market analysis. MAR+Invest will continue to pilot the Clean Water Fund in 2026.

- 3) Caribbean King Crab (CKC) Aquaculture Business Plan (BP): the consultancy started in June 2025, with an assessment of the potential structure HRHP could develop to launch this venture as a financial income source for the organization that has the previously discussed positive environmental impact. The financial planning for the venture determined the current feeding cost per crab and structured the model around the vertical RAS technology, producing 10,000 CKC (15,000 Kg) annually. The product viability was confirmed through a tasting event in December 2025, establishing farmed CKC as a competitive seafood product for local MAR markets and identifying Dungeness crab as the primary competitor in the US market. The value proposition evaluation confirmed that scalable CKC aquaculture can provide climate-resilient livelihoods for coastal communities, compensating for declining fishing incomes. Additionally, the team validated that introducing farmed CKC into natural environments increases herbivory, generating ecosystem-restorative gains that can potentially underpin biodiversity credits. Estimates of the CKC consumption average 15% of their body mass in algae daily and considering 10,000 crabs of 500 grams each would remove approximately 750 kg of algae per day, this means there is a potential substantial contribution to reef health. The team is currently working to refine this metric by establishing correlations between algae weight/volume and percent cover of fleshy macroalgae (FMA). These early data points demonstrate the restorative potential of integrating CKC aquaculture into reef management strategies. Other deliverables include market research, client profile identification and a list of potential financing sources required for the different stages of development of CKC aquaculture. Some of the early findings of the market analysis are listed below:
 - a) Robust & growing market: The global crab market was valued at ~US\$ 30 billion in 2025 and is projected to reach US\$ 36.68 billion by 2034.
 - b) Strong demand: There is a powerful consumer preference for fresh crab (the largest market segment) and fast-growing demand for sustainable, high-quality seafood in North America and Europe.
 - c) Supply gap: some crab fisheries are in decline due to climate change (e.g., Alaska, Norway), creating a supply gap that sustainable aquaculture could potentially fill.

- d) Regional potential: while Mexico is a leading crab exporter in Latin America, other MAR countries (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras) have minimal current export presence, indicating an untapped potential for a new, high-value industry.

It is within this context that two business models are being investigated: the seafood product and the climate adaptation product, which could be adopted by local communities.

HRHP continues to develop the technology for the two aquaculture models in Mexico, Belize and Honduras, preparing the strategic, technical, and financial foundations needed to scale CKC aquaculture and position it as a viable impact-driven business opportunity in the Caribbean. The final BP is to be submitted by April 2026.

- 4) Feasibility study for blue carbon and biodiversity credits in the MAR: this study provides a clear picture of where to start. It concludes that the MAR has high potential for implementing blue carbon and biodiversity credit schemes, with an emphasis on mangrove conservation and active restoration of degraded areas. However, the legal and market analysis confirmed that blue carbon represents the most viable option in the short and medium terms compared to biodiversity credits, due to its greater methodological maturity, a more robust demand in voluntary markets and existing experience in the region. It recommends strengthening ecological monitoring systems, actively involving local communities in conservation and sustainable tourism strategies, and harmonising methodological standards to integrate seagrass beds into carbon markets and coral reefs into biodiversity credit markets. It identified and prioritized four sites for potential pilot projects, strategic for mangrove conservation, integrating ecological, climatic, and social criteria: Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve (Mexico), Caye Caulker Marine Reserve (Belize), Punta Manabique Wildlife Refuge (Guatemala), and Bay Island National Park (Honduras). These align with legal and financial prioritization. It also noted that implementing carbon credit projects in other coastal ecosystems—such as seagrass beds, coral reefs, and dunes in the MAR—faces a series of technical, scientific, legal, and economic limitations. These hinder or prevent their viability under current carbon market standards. Key constraints include:
- The lack of validated methodologies for these ecosystems. Unlike mangroves or terrestrial forests, there are no widely accepted and certified methodologies for accurately measuring, reporting, and verifying (MRV) carbon storage and sequestration in reefs, dunes, and seagrass beds. This challenge is compounded by the highly dynamic nature of these ecosystems.
 - The difficulty of attribution. In these ecosystems, it is not possible to isolate the effects of a specific intervention (such as restoration) from other factors influencing carbon storage and capture.
 - Uncertain ownership regimes. Reefs, seagrass beds and coastal dunes are often located in areas where property rights are not clearly defined—a key requirement for generating and trading carbon credits.
 - Absence of regulatory frameworks. There are currently no clear regulatory, legal, or administrative frameworks for blue carbon projects in these ecosystems.
 - Limited economic viability. Available data indicate that credit generation would likely be minimal and unattractive to investors, given the high costs of restoration and monitoring.

While the conservation and restoration of coral reefs, seagrass beds, and coastal dunes are fundamental to the MAR, for now their success will require broader approaches that extend beyond carbon and biodiversity markets, such as funding extensive ecosystem data monitoring to better assess carbon levels and capture potential and capacity building with involved communities. Additionally, more research is required to determine where key areas of conservation are (for example climate resilient areas of coral), to inform on conservation,



reduction of threats, and restoration priorities. MAR Fund and its partners have already been gathering information, such as the bleach mapping efforts carried out by HRHP and led by CORAL.

Regarding advances with investors, the initiative also made significant efforts to broaden its network and deepen partnerships. Some of these interested allies are: CI Ventures, Pomona Impact, Acceleratam, BBVA Spark, CAFI, Devela Capital, Epic Angels, FIRA, GDL Angels, IDC Impacto, Latitud Ventures, Newtopia, SVX Mexico, Meridiam, NADBank, FinnFund, and Mayma. While impact funds and VCs are typically focused on early-stage, tech-driven startups with annual growth rates exceeding 10%, other debt-focused institutions require larger ticket sizes and more mature revenue streams than our companies can currently offer. As a result, ventures developing small-scale infrastructure solutions or those yet to reach breakeven fall into a funding gap, unable to attract capital from either investor group.

Current health of the MAR

The health of the MAR is facing severe threats. The 2024 Report Card developed by the Healthy Reefs Initiative categorizes most sites as being in “poor” (39%) or even in critical (23%) condition, whereas fair and good conditions were 28% and 9% respectively. Flethy macroalgae cover was generally in poor to critical values, averaging 20% for the whole MAR where nutrients and human sewage pathogens were found often in unacceptable levels. Disease outbreaks and unprecedented mass bleaching events have seriously impacted coral cover and diversity. Indeed, the Fourth Global Coral Bleaching Event, which began in 2023 and kept ongoing through 2025, brought unprecedented thermal stress to the region. In several areas, heat exposure expressed as Degree Heating Weeks reached close to 16 Degree Heating -weeks, far above global mortality thresholds (> 8 °C-weeks). This resulted in widespread bleaching and levels of mortality never before documented in the MAR. Results from the bleaching monitoring “Bleachwatch” 2024/2025 led by HRHP, and co-funded by MAR Fund, showed that mortality was higher in Honduras, with some sites close to 30% of completely dead colonies (colonies with more than 90% of tissue with mortality), followed by Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala with less mortality but with some level of affectation. These will most probably be reflected in even lower coral covers in the next 2026 Report Card currently under analysis. However, herbivorous and commercial fish had increased levels of biomass of 30 and 40% respectively, more so in fully protected areas, showing that good practices can indeed have a positive impact on the ecosystem when coupled with active enforcement and enabling conditions such as reduced pollution.

GESI

MAR+Invest screens solutions for both reef-positive impact and social inclusion. It also applies the MAR Fund’s Environmental and Social Management System risk assessment tool prior to investment to ensure risks are mitigated. Currently, the portfolio includes 25 women-led ventures and market initiatives. Partners and beneficiaries apply the MAR Fund’s Environmental and Social Management System to identify risks and implement mitigation measures. This process ensures that the portfolio and project implementers align with the MAR Fund’s core objective of benefiting the reef and coastal communities while preventing harm. See Annex D for additional information.

2. Support and Financing

While we initially envisioned mobilizing a higher amount of private capital for 2025 (target US\$ 4.5M), challenges related to the scarcity of revenue-generating, investment-ready reef-positive companies hindered this target, achieving 28%. Despite this, the current TS pipeline comprises ventures seeking a total of US\$ 20M, with ongoing investor discussions for several companies, indicating positive momentum for future mobilization.



The MAR+Invest guarantee fund proved essential to mobilize private capital for two deals. The guarantee served as a de-risking instrument for private investors, mitigating environmental risks as well as risks associated with company size and maturity.

For the Clean Water Fund, we aim to deploy at least five additional loans in 2026 to demonstrate the fund's traction and early results, thereby attracting more funders. As first steps in 2025, the partnership conducted a detailed evaluation of current service providers and identified suitable technical options which comply with regulations and reef standards. It also conducted a mapping and assessment of these solution providers as well as market sizing (*Mapping wastewater solutions in the MAR and defining blended finance products for the sector* study mentioned above).

3. Challenges and lessons learned

A key challenge has been a noticeable decline in both the number and maturity of applications in the third AP call for proposals, as well as a limited availability of early-stage ventures with strong growth potential and clear MAR impact. After three consecutive APs targeting similar profiles, it is evident that the regional ecosystem does not generate or mature new ventures at a pace that supports an annual cohort of the same size and development.

Given this limitation, launching a fourth cohort in 2026 under the same criteria would be highly challenging. Consequently, the program will be adapted to focus on engaging the hospitality sector in the region—a segment that can be incentivized to adopt best environmental practices— to strengthen financial and investment readiness so it may eventually access concessional loans through the Clean Water Fund.

Another structural obstacle is the limited availability of catalytic capital and investor interest in early-stage, high-impact infrastructure concepts, particularly in water treatment, waste management, and circularity. This gap impedes the development of efficient value chains, forcing vertical integration and slowing ecosystem development. For instance, early-stage companies, like SOS Carbon, have had to integrate operations across sargassum collection, processing, and valorization internally, which increases scaling time, raises costs, and limits opportunities for local small suppliers.

This challenge is exacerbated by the sequential readiness process: Financial Readiness must precede Investment Readiness, often requiring 6–12 months for ventures to organize financial statements, finalize business models, and prepare investor materials. Many small and medium enterprises in the MAR lack the internal staff or administrative bandwidth to maintain fluid communication with the TS team, slowing their progress. In contrast, medium-sized ventures with dedicated teams, such as Maritime Procurement Services, engage more efficiently, highlighting an uneven capacity that hinders the emergence of diversified, multi-actor value chains.

4. Objectives and Milestones for 2026

A strategic shift is planned for the next Acceleration Program cohort. Given the current drain on the reef-positive venture pool, the focus will shift to strengthening the hospitality sector's adoption of sustainable practices —particularly in wastewater treatment— and improving their financial readiness to access blended finance products through mechanisms like Viwala.

Transactional Support will broaden its focus to include Financial Readiness prior to Investment Readiness, aiming to increase the pool of financially mature companies. These activities are designed to



help early-stage ventures progress from baseline readiness to investor-facing preparation within 4–6 months. TS aims to mobilize US\$ 6M in 2026.

The Clean Water Fund will be launched as a pilot, beginning with the deployment of at least five initial loans to build initial traction. Based on this track record, targeted fundraising activities will then be pursued with the objective of raising up to US\$ 25M by the end of 2026 or early 2027.

We will also carry-out two additional sargassum consultancies, finalize the wastewater treatment pilot with Carbonwave, complete the King Crab Aquaculture Business Plan and define key next steps for that venture’s development, while continuing to fund R&D to mature the operations. We will initiate the pilot of the small-scale fisher financial product in Honduras, launch the Community of Learning and Practice for all MAR+Invest alumni, design a blue carbon project in Mexico for mangroves based on the results of the feasibility study and support women-led ventures through the HER OCEAN program.

IV. Facilities and Conservation Trust Funds

1. Design Overview:

The MAR+Invest initiative comprises several core and interconnected facilities designed to support and accompany reef-positive businesses at different stages of development: the MAR Technical Assistance Facility (MARTAF), Build & Connect, the Acceleration Program, Transactional Service, Blended Finance, which are already operational. Strong synergies between the facilities are evident. The Acceleration Program and Build & Connect prepare early-stage ventures for Transactional Service support, which in turn prepares a pipeline for the Blended Finance facility. The MAR Technical Assistance Facility funds strategic studies that inform the focus and product design of the financing facilities, creating a cohesive ecosystem of support. This structure creates a continuum of support—from early-stage ideation and capacity building to investment readiness, deal structuring, financing and continued support. The case of BioPlaster showcases this continued multi-component support and its positive outcomes: it started with the leadership team participating in the Acceleration Program in 2023, followed by working with Transactional Services to begin fundraising, where connections with several investing firms were made. To date, it has successfully raised US\$ 755k in private funding.

The Women for the MAR program complements the existing facilities, as will the Clean Water Fund and the Community of Learning and Practice:

- The Women for the MAR program aims to strengthen the economic autonomy of women in reef-dependent communities by providing seed capital and tailored capacity building. To date, it has mapped 60 women-led ventures, supported 94 women across 13 ventures, enabling business formalization and fostering sustainable practices that benefit the MAR. MAR Fund and New Ventures successfully fundraised jointly for the Women for the MAR program to create a tailored Acceleration Program for women-led ventures of coastal communities and will provide small grants to support selected ventures (program named HER OCEAN). These efforts will complement the MAR+Invest pipeline.
- The Clean Water Fund, currently in a pilot/design phase, is led by Viwala. Joint fundraising efforts have started.
- The Community of Learning and Practice (pending 2026 replenishment approval) is led by Sureste Sostenible in close collaboration with New Ventures' Colectiva program. This program will ensure ventures continue to develop after initial support to strengthen the existing portfolio.



It will provide a dedicated space for ongoing learning and advancement toward the next stage of growth.

Opportunities for women, youth, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups are embedded in the design of MAR+Invest facilities. They screen for social inclusion, and the MAR Fund's Environmental and Social Management System is applied to investments to ensure benefits for coastal communities and to mitigate risks.

2. Progress and Challenges:

The core facilities are operational with positive results to date and the Clean Water Fund is in a pilot/design phase, the Community of Learning and Practice is pending approval and the HER OCEAN program is beginning in Q1 2026.

The initiative mobilized US\$ 1,280,000 in private capital in 2025, bringing its cumulative leverage to US\$ 6,153,818 across 8 companies to date. Transactional Services actively supported 12 companies this year with financial projections and analysis and connecting with potential investors. Viwala deployed two concessional loans using a blended finance approach. These loans, totalling US\$ 125k, leveraged the MAR+Invest Guarantee Fund and GFCR concessional funding to mobilize private capital from investors. The MAR+Invest guarantee supported the mobilization of US\$ 40k in private capital fully protecting it against first-loss. Additionally, the Acceleration Program supported a total of 21 ventures (7 finished the 2024 cohort in April 2025, and 14 participated in the Bootcamp of the 2025 cohort, of which 8 are still undergoing full acceleration, until April 2026). Two small grants were deployed to two ventures of the Acceleration and B&C portfolio.

The total co-financing raised and matched by the alliance in 2025 is US\$ 601,121.80 and progress of the operational facilities can be found in Section Programme Progress Overview and Solutions.

Our target for private capital mobilization in 2025 was missed in part due to a scarcity of investment-ready, revenue-generating reef-positive companies. A significant challenge was the decline in the quantity of applications for the third Acceleration Program cohort, indicating a limited regional pipeline of mature ventures. This has prompted a strategic shift for the next cohort toward engaging the hotel sector.

Another structural challenge is the lack of catalytic capital for early-stage infrastructure, which forces companies into vertical integration, slows ecosystem development, and limits opportunities for local suppliers. Furthermore, many small and medium enterprises lack the internal capacity for the sequential Financial and Investment Readiness process, slowing their progress compared to more structured ventures.

Challenges encountered in the 2023 B&C cohort were also linked to the limited capacity and resources of the supported projects. The leaders identified critical areas requiring additional support: continued guidance to reach commercial readiness, seed funding for pilots, specialized legal help (e.g., with permits, contracts, and intellectual property), and the development of professional marketing materials, financial models, market validation and go-to-market strategies, regulatory compliance plans, targeted communications, and technical feasibility studies. Participants also suggested that a longer program with more consistent scheduling, more practical hands-on tools for early-stage ventures, direct access to funding for prototypes and pilot tests, and ongoing networking and future learning opportunities would be highly beneficial for advancing their solutions.

Recognizing this challenge within the MAR portfolio, MAR+Invest developed a strategy to create a dedicated space for fostering a community of practice among the portfolio's projects, ventures, and individuals. This initiative aims to move beyond mentorship by providing targeted expert services, practical training, and seed capital to help these projects achieve market validation and investment readiness.

V. Enabling Environment

1. Policies at National and Sub-National Levels (Maximum 1 page)

To support the significant barriers faced by reef-positive ventures to mobilize private capital in the MAR, MAR+Invest Build & Connect (MAR-Leadership Program) launched a cohort focused on public policy design. These efforts aim to reduce barriers for businesses and ventures with positive impact (BVPI+). Sureste Sostenible, led and designed the cohort based on insights from a regional barrier analysis. This analysis identified the following main barriers (see [Annex B](#) for reports):

- Integrating environmental policies with economic development remains limited, and implementation capacity is low.
- Fragmented legal and institutional frameworks create uncertainty, hindering private investment.
- Slow regulatory processes, combined with bureaucracy and weak coordination among authorities, exacerbate the situation.
- Insufficient access to green finance and incentives for early-stage ventures.
- SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) face challenges such as high certification costs and limited access to concessional loans.
- Technological gaps and low adoption of innovation remain key challenges.
- Inadequate environmental infrastructure and weak regulatory enforcement persist.
- Poorly managed tourism is placing increasing pressure on key ecosystems.

The cohort focused on the strengthened capacities for designing public policies to reduce regulatory and financial barriers for BVPI+. To achieve this, it targeted committed officials from both executive and legislative bodies in the region, as well as leaders from civil society organizations with influence in the MAR governments. The cohort integrated proposals addressing thematic areas such as fisheries, wastewater treatment, and the conservation and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems. SS subsequently launched the call for proposals in Q2 2025. Following the submission period, the Evaluation Committee—composed of MAR+Invest partners and the [International Conservation Caucus Foundation](#) (ICCF Mexico)—evaluated the submissions and selected 15 leaders to develop public policy proposals (see [Annex B](#) for details).

The 2025 public policy cohort of the 2025 B&C (MAR-Leadership) training program was completed with 29 hours of in-person training and 21 hours of virtual learning from June to November 2025. In addition, participants completed 12 hours of leadership soft skills training, of which 8 hours were delivered in person (included within the 29 in-person hours) and 4 hours were delivered virtually (included within the 21 virtual hours). ICCF Mexico provided expert mentoring, with additional sessions led by invited subject-matter experts. The training was organized into five modules, delivered in the following sequence to strengthen participants' capacities in public policy design and leadership: (1) the public policy cycle, (2) financing solutions, (3) policy advocacy, (4) approaches to equity, diversity, and human rights, and (5) public policy innovation. Soft skills training focused on personal and professional

development, high-impact mindset, strategic collaboration, and collaborative negotiation (see [Annex B](#) for details).

Following the submission of interim proposals in September 2025, mentors from SS and ICCF provided technical feedback to enhance analytical quality and feasibility. This guidance reframed policy challenges around the provision of a common good, emphasizing measurable impacts on communities and reef integrity. Leaders were advised to detail legislative and financing pathways, propose follow-on mechanisms like technical standards, and include phased investment estimates. Final proposals were submitted in November 2025 and the program was successfully closed, with 14 out of the 15 leaders submitting public policy proposals (see [Annex B](#) for details and the [narrative note](#)). The policies developed within each MAR country are as follows:

- In Mexico, leaders focused on strengthening public policy frameworks that integrate marine conservation into the country’s climate, water, and fisheries agendas. Legal reforms were also promoted to prioritize circular wastewater reuse as a strategy for water security and to reduce pollution affecting the Mesoamerican Reef. For legislative harmonization, one of the proposal’s goals is to create a legal framework to protect Mexico’s coral reefs and support their sustainable management. A federal congressional motion was advanced. It urged environmental authorities and the state of Quintana Roo to strengthen coral reef conservation, emphasizing the need for dedicated budgets and alignment of territorial policies with reef-positive productive activities. Additional efforts included strengthening fish replenishment zones and incorporating climate resilience approaches into fisheries and aquaculture management in Quintana Roo. The initiatives also promote sustainable coastal economic models, low-impact tourism, and greater local community participation in environmental governance. Collectively, these actions contribute to climate resilience, healthier ecosystems, and greater coherence among the country’s climate, marine, and sustainable development policies.
A concrete example from the 2025 cohort is a proposal by Gloria Cuevas, which includes a sub-action to design a National Blue Carbon Strategy for Mexico. It outlines key elements to operationalize blue carbon, including improved measurement methodologies tailored to coastal ecosystems, strengthened governance to enable access to voluntary carbon markets, and environmental and social safeguards. It also incorporates a monitoring framework focused on ecosystem services relevant to climate adaptation, such as carbon sequestration, coastal protection, fisheries, and resilience to extreme events.
- In Guatemala, the leaders’ proposals focused on strengthening legal frameworks to protect key marine and coastal ecosystems within the MAR region. Central to these efforts is Bill 6499, which seeks to reform Decree 23-2005 governing the Punta de Manabique Wildlife Refuge to strengthen protection of the transboundary Corona Caimán Reef through regulated use, conservation zoning, and improved enforcement. In parallel with these ecosystem-focused strategies, leaders supported progress toward a long-awaited national water law to improve water governance, protect freshwater and coastal ecosystems, and recognize access to water as a human right.
- In Belize, a proposal was developed to reform small-scale fisheries, with a focus on gender mainstreaming, inclusive stakeholder participation, and ensuring equitable reef-related resource benefits for both women and men within marine governance systems.
- In Honduras, proposals strengthened payment for ecosystem services (PES) frameworks in marine parks, advanced municipal and hotel wastewater-treatment policy recommendations to reduce marine pollution loads, and positioned blue-green infrastructure standards for reef-positive and climate-beneficial enterprise enablement within coastal-insular governance instruments—specifically relevant for the Caribbean coast and the Bay Islands archipelago.



As positive outcomes from this cohort and in addition to drafting proposals, leaders made important advances for the MAR:

- A key achievement was the incorporation of specific objectives, actions, and indicators for mangroves, seagrasses, and coral reefs into Mexico’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)—the country’s official climate action plan under the Paris Agreement—and environmental sector planning instruments. This positioned marine and coastal ecosystems as core ecosystem-based solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation.
- In Mexico, a federal congressional motion urged environmental authorities and the Quintana Roo state to strengthen coral reef conservation.
- Circular wastewater reuse has now been formally referenced in the legislative opinion on the Mexican National Water Law reform, currently under discussion in Congress. This development represents a transition from a technical proposal to consideration within the country’s regulatory process. The reform package also contains a detailed technical rationale for including Circular Water Reuse in the amendments proposed by the Executive branch.
- On November 5, 2025, partners of the MAR+Invest initiative participated in the high-level policy dialogue “Voices for the Mesoamerican Reef: Toward a regional agenda based on science, cooperation, and legislation” at the Mexican Senate. Organized by ICCF México under the leadership of Senator Maki Esther Ortiz, the presentation outlined key achievements including the legislative efforts to protect the Corona Caimán reef by Guatemalan Congresswoman Karina Paz, and the recognition of urgent regional threats such as climate change, pollution, and overfishing. Stakeholders reaffirmed the importance of the 2025 MAR Leadership Program for developing public policy leaders who support enabling conditions for reef-positive businesses and entrepreneurship. The event solidified support from lawmakers, government officials, academia, and civil society, reinforcing collaboration and alignment in governance for long-term reef conservation and nature-positive economic development ([Official event recording](#); [Official photographic record of the event](#)).

2. Other Enabling Environment Factors:

The engagement of other funding sources supporting complementary programs in the region has been critical. Notably, the Inter-American Development Bank launched a consultancy to evaluate and design an outcomes-based finance mechanism in Belize, with potential for regional replication. New Ventures [Frontiers](#) was selected to implement this consultancy, creating a valuable contribution that aligns with and strengthens MAR+Invest’s objectives.

Towards the end of 2025, the Resilient Futures Fund approved a proposal from MAR Fund to support women-led ventures in the MAR region, entitled “A blended approach for women entrepreneurs for climate solutions in the Mesoamerican Reef Region”. This support includes a dedicated acceleration program, led by New Ventures, and small grants for venture growth. This partnership is a significant enabling factor outside of formal policy. Women in MAR communities often face structural barriers to business growth and market participation, with more limited access than men to technical assistance, specialized equipment, business networks, and finance. As a result, many women-led initiatives remain small and under-resourced, limiting their capacity to scale or engage effectively with the existing components of the MAR+Invest program.

This funding directly addresses this gap, enabling us to allocate resources to strengthen these foundational ventures. This supports the overarching goal of fostering an inclusive blue economy with

tangible opportunities for women. By securing targeted external funding and designing tailored interventions—combining acceleration support with grants—for early-stage, women-led ventures, a key pathway has been established. A critical remaining challenge, however, is ensuring the long-term sustainability of this support and building a more robust local ecosystem. This includes expanding accessible mentorship, networks, and follow-on funding tailored to women entrepreneurs in the blue economy.

To meet these needs, strategies should integrate a stronger gender lens across all program components and foster partnerships with local women’s business associations. Looking ahead, GFCR could potentially further strengthen the enabling environment by: supporting the scale-up of this successful pilot, funding the development of gender-specific technical assistance tools, and incentivizing blended finance mechanisms to de-risk early-stage investment in women-led blue economy ventures.

3. Complementary Initiatives:

MAR+Invest continues to coordinate with key complementary initiatives that support its activities:

- MAR Fund's Protection of Maritime Resources in Central America III program (Phase III), a German Cooperation-funded project through the KfW, strengthens 31 CMPAs in the MAR, of which 13 are also priority sites in MAR+Invest, and is crucial for the long-term protection and economic sustainability of protected areas. Through this initiative, MAR Fund is strengthening governance, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable resource use—including revenue-generating community ventures in several protected areas. A total of US\$ 6,838,012 from Phase III is being matched to support these MAR+Invest priority sites, alongside an additional US\$ 278,483 for economic activities that promote financial sustainability of these areas or community-led ventures. This funding has also enabled MARFin training for priority CMPAs, directly supporting improved management effectiveness and long-term financial sustainability of the protected areas where MAR+Invest operates.
- Viwala engaged with IDB and regional blue finance efforts to explore applying for GBFF funding as part of the Blue Outcomes Fund, a regional results-based financing mechanism supporting blue infrastructure and biodiversity initiatives. These discussions remain exploratory, and Viwala will continue engaging with IDB to assess whether such an opportunity could materialize.
- The ACCION project (Sustainable Communities for Climate Action in the Yucatán Peninsula), financed by the [Green Climate Fund](#), complements MAR+Invest in Quintana Roo by building climate resilience in the region. Implemented by FMCN and Sureste Sostenible, it advances ecosystem-based adaptation, sustainable livelihoods, conservation, restoration, and targeted financing. ACCIÓN also supports knowledge management and alignment with territorial policy. Projects supported by MAR+Invest can apply for ACCIÓN funding, linking investment readiness, capacity building, and local implementation.

VI. Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI)

1. Gender Roles and Risks:

Roles and responsibilities are highly dependent on the sector and venture structure. While MAR+Invest has often observed women participation in reef-positive “tech” ventures in the region (VOS Honduras, BioPlaster, TWS, HAWA, to name a few), women are frequently excluded from or invisible within traditional sectors like artisanal fishing. However, we observe that women often possess strong organizational and soft skills vital for running businesses. Significant effort is being invested in designing technical assistance and financial products to encourage greater participation by women.

Expanding participation requires acknowledging and mitigating the unique risks faced by women, particularly during in-person field activities, workshops, or collaborative projects. There is a persistent, increased risk of harassment when working in male-dominated environments or during travel and events. Ensuring safe, respectful, and equitable spaces is not only a moral imperative but a practical necessity to enable meaningful and sustained involvement of women in conservation and sustainable development initiatives.

The opportunities for integration of indigenous peoples into leadership or business development roles remains limited, though promising new ventures have emerged, such as the Saving our Sharks Foundation supporting a shark-fishing cooperative transitioning to sustainable tourism operations.

2. Programme Actions and Outcomes:

Specific actions to promote gender equity and social inclusion this year included the intentional design of interventions to empower underrepresented groups. The Acceleration Program cohort received a Gender Perspective Workshop during the Bootcamp, focused on understanding how acknowledging diverse needs and experiences strengthens social equity, enhances impact, and contributes to the long-term sustainability of entrepreneurial initiatives.

In this period and following an incident during the in-person workshop in Cozumel of the B&C 2025 cohort, safeguarding measures were strengthened by Sureste Sostenible, incorporating a mandatory sensitization session on gender perspective. The session framed gender rights as a common good and applied an interactive methodology to foster collective reflection without targeting individuals. Key topics included: structural inequality drivers (patriarchy and androcentrism) and their presence in legislation, healthy masculinity, institutions, and coastal-marine community practices; recognition of machismo expressions and degrees of aggression (ill-treatment, abuse, harassment, and violence), aligned to the program's Code of Conduct safeguards; and a closing segment on affirmative consent ("yes means yes") using audiovisual resources to promote awareness and behavioural change. This activity ensured all leaders advance with baseline competencies on ethical, inclusive, and gender-balanced policy and business environments, reinforcing social legitimacy, community participation, and equity principles as cross-cutting enablers. See details in [Annex E](#).

While designing financial products for small-scale fishers in Honduras, we are also exploring ways to identify and assess the participation of women across the value chain, with the aim of better understanding gender dynamics and opportunities for inclusion.

The Women for the MAR initiative identifies and supports early-stage ventures led by women in rural areas, including young women, women with disabilities, and women from Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, such as Maya and Garífuna, among others. It aims to support financial and economic autonomy and inclusive development for women in the MAR region, foster regional collaboration, and broaden access to resources. Key results to date include empowering more than 90 women with entrepreneurship skills and providing technical and financial support to 13 ventures, reaching women living across 37 coastal communities. Furthermore, a newly approved project from Resilient Futures Fund will also support women-led ventures through acceleration. Together, these actions will strengthen the pipeline for women-led ventures and enhance the capacities of women entrepreneurs in the MAR (see more details in the **Enabling Environment** section).

3. Lessons Learned & Future Direction:



A key lesson from this reporting period is that good practices require active enforcement. While documentation and protocols for GESI and risk mitigation are in place, incidents can still occur. For the MAR+Invest team, this underscored the necessity of constant training, preventing unnecessary exposure to risk, taking immediate action when issues arise, and continually reassessing preventive measures based on new incidents. Moving forward, the program will strengthen its proactive monitoring and rapid response mechanisms to ensure inclusivity and mitigate remaining vulnerabilities, and strengthen actions implemented through the ESAP of implementing partners and grantees.

VII. Partnerships

1. Partner Contributions (Maximum 1 page):

Implementing Partners: As detailed previously, the core implementing partners—MAR Fund, Healthy Reefs for Healthy People, New Ventures, Sureste Sostenible, and Viwala—continue to execute workplans efficiently, generating positive results and adapting to learnings. Each partner brings its own network of collaborators, which significantly enhances the initiative's reach and impact (see [2025 Annual Report Risks Partners MAR.xlsx](#) for the full list).

Direct Partners of Convening Agents: Other grantees, such as GOAL, the Mexican Carbon Program (PMC), The Ocean Foundation, IDOM, HAWA, Bay Islands Conservation Association (BICA), are critical players. They carry out essential technical projects and on-the-ground implementation, directly translating strategy into action.

Indirect Partners of Convening Agents: Collaborators, such as co-managers and managers of CMPAs, are vital to our work. MAR Fund's initiatives help maintain these important connections. In Honduras and through GOAL's work, fishing cooperatives have also been key indirect partners, participating in the design of parametric insurance led by WTW, as well as in financial product design led by Viwala. Other collaborators of the partners such as key project implementers and consultants have made significant contributions to MAR+Invest this year. For example, the ICCF group designed and led the 2025 B&C cohort and was instrumental in several of its key successes.

Research/Scientific Partners: Research contributors to the feasibility study for blue carbon and biodiversity credits are the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), and Centro de Investigación y de Estudios Avanzados (Cinvestav) provided data and technical expertise. The Healthy Reefs Initiative (HRI) network of organizations provides essential reef monitoring data. The Instituto Mexicano de Investigación en Pesca y Acuicultura Sostenibles (IMIPAS) contributes crucial research and development for the King Crab aquaculture project.

A significant achievement by partners this period was the deployment of the first two blended finance loans and the subsequent design of the Clean Water Fund. This fund specifically targets one of the most critical threats to the MAR: the lack of wastewater treatment in the hotel and construction sectors. It marks a clear, dedicated commitment to addressing this issue and requires strong collaboration among the partners to launch and operate the fund, for which specific fundraising efforts will be required to complement MAR+Invest.

A recurring challenge this year was the difficulty in securing effective and reliable consultants. Several lacked the administrative strength and responsiveness required to execute tasks and adapt to



unforeseen events which led to delays to deliver products. Additional challenges were encountered with shipment of materials into Mexico, with hefty custom processes significantly impacting project timeline. These issues highlight a gap in reliable local implementation capacity that are able to comply with all requirements for project implementation.

2. Fostering Collaboration Among Partners:

MAR Fund, as the Convening Agent, plays a central role in fostering collaboration and ensuring strategic alignment among all partners. It acts as a facilitator, encouraging connections between organizations and other regional programs to advance MAR+Invest objectives. Clear examples include the development of Women for the MAR, which—through joint fundraising with NV—led to the approval of the RFF-funded acceleration program dedicated to women-led ventures, as well as the development of the Clean Water Fund, led by Viwala with outreach to funders and users from MAR Fund and other partners. Additionally, team members often represent MAR+Invest interests at external events to optimize resources and maintain a unified presence.

Several structured mechanisms facilitate collaboration. MAR Fund maintains close contact with implementing partners through bi-weekly coordination calls and dedicated meetings for pipeline evaluation (Impact Committee) and program updates, ensuring all activities align with the overarching workplan and goals. Progress, lessons learned, and achievements are formally documented in semi-annual interim technical (including ESAP) and financial reports submitted to MAR Fund, with any required changes discussed collectively before submission to GFCR. For key decisions, two dedicated committees oversee cohort selection (Project Selection and Investment Committee) and loan approvals (Steering Committee), ensuring transparent and collaborative governance.

VIII. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

1. Overview of M&E Activities

Key M&E efforts this period included the reef health monitoring conducted by HRHP and its network of partners, which provides the crucial data for the 2026 Report Card. 313 sites have successfully been surveyed along the MAR, thanks to the participation of almost 100 surveyors from more than 30 partner organisations. All data was uploaded to the AGRRA platform and are currently under post processing and analysis.

The partnership continues to use and optimize workflows for MERMAID and REEF+, though timely data collection and consolidation remain a challenge across all initiative components. To standardize data, New Ventures created a new online survey to collect data from Acceleration Program participants and continues to reach out to previous cohorts for updates when feasible. The team also contacts supported companies, like Maritime Procurement Services (MPS), to track progress and impact, though for TS companies, this depends on the company's willingness to share data despite existing MoUs.

HRHP plays a key role in assessing the environmental alignment of companies in the TS and Viwala pipeline. They also developed specific M&E plans for the two deployed blended finance loans (TWS and Hotel Chiringuito) and evaluated wastewater treatment solutions in the region to ensure reef-positive alignment.



Quantitative and qualitative data are combined through an internal dashboard that consolidates data per solution. This information is consolidated for the indicators of the GFCR M&E framework and then transposed into MERMAID—a somewhat hefty process. Starting with this 2025 annual report, MAR Fund is contracting additional support to help consolidate data and indicators for submission.

As mentioned in the Solutions section, the results from the "Bleachwatch" 2024/2025 bleaching monitoring led by HRHP and co-funded by MAR Fund are important because they represent a first step toward identifying which sites and coral species are less vulnerable to bleaching. This information can help guide protection and threat reduction actions in both more and less resilient sites across the region.

2. Entities Responsible for M&E

HRHP is responsible for reef health indicator monitoring and evaluation. All implementing partners collect social indicators depending which component the solution was a part of, while New Ventures is responsible for financial indicators linked to TS and Viwala. MAR Fund consolidates information from all partners and ensures cohesion across all measured data and targets.

Since 2024, an indicator taskforce with at least one member from each partner team has been established to manage the significant workload of tracking and updating portfolio data. This taskforce convenes before reporting periods to refine milestones and documentation needs and meets regularly during report preparation. Data, strategies, and targets are reviewed during partner meetings.

The primary capacity gap identified is not technical but related to the high workload required to update multiple documents and platforms for a portfolio of over 40 solutions. To streamline, New Ventures created a new online survey to collect data from program participants and an additional person will be contracted during reporting periods to provide support for this process.

3. Key Achievements and Insights

In 2025, the monitoring of reef health across 313 sites was carried out by HRHP and partners. This data will be used to develop the MAR reef health 2026 Report Card by HRHP.

Some of the indicators of this period are highlighted below:

- Coral reef and MPA/OECM area benefiting: This figure remains unchanged. We continue to work towards positively impacting the 18 priority areas of MAR+Invest, totalling 696.12 km².
- Jobs created/sustained: 1,240.
- Direct beneficiaries: 9,343 (as per agreement with the GFCR team, we also count the families of the direct beneficiaries).
- Indirect beneficiaries: MAR population: 3,570,000.
- Financing leveraged: in 2025, US\$ 601,121.80 in co-financing and US\$ 1,280,000 in private capital was leveraged (reported in Annex A), totalling US\$ 1,881,121.80. Since inception, cumulating both types of leveraged financing amounts to US\$ **16,193,950**.

Several indicators for the 2027 and 2030 targets were adjusted following the initiative's launch. Targets 2.1, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, and 5.1 were increased, as it was initially difficult to define realistic goals without knowing the portfolio we would be able to support in the MAR. Having already surpassed some targets, we adapted by raising them. Conversely, we adjusted certain ecological indicators (4.1 and 4.2) downward, based on a revision the current reef health situation, the 2023/2024 Global Mass Bleaching Event, and preliminary results from the 2025 monitoring campaign, these targets are unlikely to be reached in the time frame of the MAR+Invest initiative compared to estimates made just four years ago.

The MAR+Invest team continues to include the M&E strategy from the beginning of evaluating projects, which has proven to enrich the decision-making process. Threat reduction projects like wastewater treatment and sargassum have taken more importance and are at the base of new consultancies and the Clean Water Fund. We continue to adapt methods to gather information for the AP, B&C and TS components to be able to gather more efficiently their information and mainstream the [2X Challenge criteria](#). For example, a questionnaire used to gather indicator information was updated by New Ventures in an effort to consolidate all required data (e.g., project location, implementing team, beneficiaries) in alignment with GFCR reporting indicators. However, consistently engaging teams to complete the questionnaire remains a challenge. We will continue refining the tool to reduce redundancies and improve response rates.

HRHP also supported Viwala to develop two specific M&E plans for the first blended finance products, which are being periodically reviewed. For the Chiringuito Hotel loan, a baseline water quality sampling was conducted by [Centinelas del Agua](#), an organization with expertise on this topic, to establish effluent baselines for comparison post-wastewater treatment plant installation.

4. Challenges and Lessons Learned

The main obstacles this period were related to field monitoring activities, including delays in permitting, weather conditions, and surveyor availability. Budget was also a challenge due to substantial cost increases for field activities.

5. Next Steps and Timeline

Upcoming M&E activities include supporting the 2025 Acceleration Program cohort by providing a diagnosis session on how to define environmental and social indicators, and the selection process for the 2026 AP cohort. HRHP will continue reviewing projects for Transactional Services and concessional loans, follow up on R&D contracts for King Crab aquaculture and water quality monitoring for deals in the pipelines, and analyze all AGRR data for the 2026 Report Card.

The whole team also continues updating MERMAID, reviewing targets, and developing M&E plans for new financial interventions within the portfolio.

IX. Programme Management

1. Decisions and Resolutions by Governance Body:

The Project Selection and Investment Committee (PSIC) and the Steering Committee (SC) both held meetings during 2025. The SC was convened to review and approve the two loan deals with the GFCR to oversee the use of concessional funds. For the Acceleration Program selection, both committees collaborated: the PSIC first pre-selected a shortlist of ventures, which was then presented to the SC for final approval. During the PSIC meeting, temporary replacement members from HATCH Blue, a global incubator and fund that supports early-stage startups building sustainable solutions for the blue economy, and [CORAL](#) were invited to ensure quorum, providing valuable technical advice.

All partners meet bi-weekly to share important updates on program activities, ensure alignment and make operational decisions. Since July 2025, partners also dedicated significant effort to preparing the 2026 replenishment proposal, engaging in strategic discussions, budget revisions and drafting required



documents, with the final draft submitted to GFCR in December 2025. A critical decision was the creation of the Clean Water Fund.

MAR Fund operates a short-term investment account for funds that are not being used immediately. Following the GFCR requirements, GFCR funds are placed in this account until they are to be used. Since this procedure was put in place in February 2024, the GFCR funds have generated a profit of US\$ 85,750.

2. Work Plan & Budgetary Adjustments:

In July 2025, a budget cut of US\$ 3.3M announced by the GFCR required a strategic re-prioritization of activities to ensure operational capacity through 2030. The partnership developed innovative solutions to maintain key objectives.

Workplan changes:

- In alignment with strategic adjustments and following a decision among MAR+Invest partners, the B&C focus is shifting from designing a new 2026 cohort to strengthening integration, scaling, and providing technical support for the most advanced projects from the 2023 and 2025 cohorts. To sustain acceleration pathways, foster partnerships, and enable ongoing applied learning, Sureste Sostenible proposes redirecting resources to design and launch a regional MAR+Invest Learning and Practice Community. The corresponding activity will therefore be renamed 2.2.6.5 “Design and development of the MAR+Invest Learning Community.” This new platform will consolidate capacity, leverage evidence, facilitate peer learning, and create structured links with accelerators, investors, and strategic partners to accelerate the impact of reef-positive enterprises.
- The Acceleration Program will also shift focus due to a shrinking pool of reef positive ventures. It will direct efforts to strengthen the hospitality industry, and support transition to sustainable practices while preparing for access to financial opportunities such as concessional capital.
- The fundraising efforts will also include the new complementary programs: Clean Water Fund and Women for the MAR.

Budgetary adjustments:

- For 2026-2027, catalytic funding of US\$ 595,000 will be deployed, with US\$ 110,000 reallocated from the original catalytic budget to the MAR Technical Assistance Facility's operational budget to safeguard core functions.
- Due to development challenges to launch the pilot of the small-scale fisher financial product in Honduras, available funding and replenishment funds are proposed to be distributed differently. Funds originally intended for replicating a pilot in a second MAR country are now prioritized to ensure the successful launch in Honduras, including capacity building and potential parametric insurance model updates. A separate US\$ 100,000 amount remains allocated for future replication.
- Some concessional capital planned for the 2026 replenishment will be redirected to cover Viwala's operational costs for designing and launching new financial products, including the Clean Water Fund and loans for fishers. Viwala will compensate for this shortfall by attracting additional investor funding.

For full details on these adjustments, please refer to the [Annex 1](#) for the 2026 draft replenishment narrative.

3. Operational Adjustments:



Several team changes occurred in 2025. New Ventures welcomed Laura Ortegon as the new Director for Transactional Services, supported by Indira Rojas, Transactional Services Investment Analysts. Ricardo Sarmiento replaced Valentina De Leo as Acceleration Program Project Manager. At Sureste Sostenible, Maria Fernanda Onofre became the new Build & Connect Coordinator, occasionally supported by a Technical Analyst, Marina Ordiales. Viwala added Jessica Díaz as Impact Project Manager and involved other team members as needed for loan design and assessments. MAR Fund also onboarded the new MAR+Invest Communications Officer in January 2025, Roxana Chavez.

4. Operational Challenges & Mitigation:

To improve efficiency in pipeline development, Transactional Services has organized bi-weekly impact assessment meetings with HRHP and MAR Fund, streamlining evaluations and preventing bottlenecks.

Significant staff changes in early 2025 were managed by ensuring overlap for training and a swift onboarding process for new hires, which prevented operational gaps.

Unresolved challenges include the persistent difficulty in finding reliable local consultants with strong administrative and technical capacities. Additionally, the need for a local, trust-based relationship manager to engage the hospitality sector for wastewater treatment adoption was determined. To address this gap, Viwala will recruit a commercial specialist to accelerate sector engagement and ensure the success of financial products, scheduled to start in January 2026.

5. Replenishment

The program is preparing for replenishment in May 2026, marking the end of the first two years of the consolidation phase. The draft replenishment proposal, requesting a total of **US\$ 3,487,685**, was submitted to GFCR for review in December 2025.

X. 2026 Objectives

1. 2026 Objectives

The main objectives and priorities for 2026, based on the replenishment draft submitted in December 2025, are:

- Finalize the operational structure of the Clean Water Fund, secure 5 pilot loans, and initiate fundraising for the fund.
- Complete the third Acceleration Program and launch the call for proposals for a fourth cohort, strategically focused on the hotel sector.
- Design and carry out the Acceleration Program focused on women-led ventures as part of the RFF grant.
- Complete the installation and testing of the wastewater treatment system at Carbonwave.
- Initiate the pilot for the small-scale fisher financial product in Honduras.
- Launch the Community of Learning and Practice for all MAR+Invest alumni, led by Sureste Sostenible.
- Carry out the second and third sargassum consultancies with Carbonwave: a disposal and landfill study and an offshore collection study.
- Develop a report on financial gaps for Coastal and Marine Protected Areas based on data analyzed through MARFin.
- Design a blue carbon project for mangroves in Mexico.

- Mobilize US\$ 6M in private capital.
- Continue to fundraise to co-finance the different programs.

Key deliverables for the first half of 2026 include

- Finalizing the King Crab Aquaculture Business Plan,
- Finalize the 2026 replenishment proposal.

The strategies to achieve these objectives involve the strategic shifts outlined for the Build & Connect, Acceleration Program, and Transactional Service components, coupled with the official launch of the Clean Water Fund. This integrated approach is designed to consolidate the current pipeline, attract new ventures, mobilize additional capital, and ensure the initiative's longevity through scalable blended finance products.

XI. Communication, Visibility and Knowledge Management

1. Strategic Role of Communications:

Communications played a strategic and central role in enhancing the program's visibility, stakeholder engagement, results sharing, and supporting pipeline development. These efforts aligned and amplified partner communication activities, ensuring coherent narratives and progress. The communications function also operated as a capital mobilisation enabler through targeted visual materials, such as the *Resilient for Futures Fund* video, which supported fundraising efforts for the Women of the MAR program and its gender-focused Acceleration Program ([Resilient for Futures Fund VF.mp4](#)).

Communications further supported the initiative's objectives by translating technical outputs into accessible, decision-oriented messages, for example simplifying complex concepts, such as blended finance mechanisms, into clear visual and narrative products to facilitate understanding of MAR+Invest's financing approach (e.g. [blended finance presentation](#)).

Digital channels were leveraged to promote opportunities and updates, including the Call for Referrals 2025–2026. This effort contributed to pipeline expansion and increased visibility of MAR+Invest's actions across the region, including amplification through the social media channels of the Latin American Impact Investment Forum 2026 (FLII).

MAR+Invest team members maintained a strong presence at key international and regional events throughout the year to promote connections within the ecosystem, which directly contributed to pipeline sourcing and identification of funding opportunities. Partners collectively promoted MAR+Invest at 34 events focused on the blue economy, regional innovation, networking, and finance convenings, increasing the public visibility throughout the year. Specific participation to events in 2025 can be found in Table 3 below:

Table 3: MAR+Invest 2025 Events participation

Type of participation	Number of events
Total events	34

In-person events	24
Webinars and online events	10
Participation in panels (conferences)	20

A detailed report is available in [Annex 3](#).

2. Alignment with Programme Goals:

Key achievements were communicated in a timely manner. Specific case studies were developed and published to highlight progress (e.g., [“From Threat to Opportunity: BioPlaster’s Actions to Transform Sargassum into Sustainable Packaging”](#) or [“Protecting the Mesoamerican Reef through Blended Finance: The MAR+Invest Case Study for the Status and Trends of Caribbean Coral Reefs: 1970 - 2024 report”](#)).

A significant enhancement was the integration of an [interactive portfolio map](#) on the MAR+Invest website, allowing stakeholders to easily visualize solution locations and program components. Other notable products produced were:

- A new MAR+Invest results [brief](#) to showcase achievements, attract funders, and promote the Clean Water Fund.
- The launch and growth of a dedicated [MAR+Invest LinkedIn](#) page as the primary news channel.
- Several videos, reels, and social media posts for content promotion.
- In MAR Fund’s webinar series, a [webinar](#) promoted the launch of the third Acceleration Program, featuring an entrepreneur from a previous cohort.

Communications targeted a range of audiences, including the private sector, donors, practitioners, and government counterparts, with tailored messaging. Key content (see [this folder](#) for annual content materials) included program impacts, case studies, and opportunities like the Acceleration Program call for proposals.

Evidence of effectiveness includes significant growth in social media followers across the partners’ channels, strong engagement with published content, and the practical use of the new brief in fundraising conversations. The LinkedIn channel performed exceptionally well due to consistent, targeted content. See a detailed analysis in [Annex 4](#).

A challenge encountered in this period was consolidating and communicating impact data and updating all the GFCR solutions in the [REEF+ platform](#), which required significant time and coordination. In parallel, the development of case studies was influenced by time limitations associated with supporting multiple high-impact program activities. While core implementation, platform updates, and communications reporting continued to move forward, the time available for in-depth research, analysis, and documentation remained limited, influencing the scope of case study development during the reporting period.

4. Knowledge Sharing:

Tools developed to support knowledge exchange included the new interactive website map and published case studies. Lessons learned were documented in internal tracking documents and shared across partners during regular coordination meetings, as well as on the REEF+ platform when relevant. The upcoming launch of the MAR+Invest Learning Community is a key step in formalizing this exchange.



Planned improvements for the next year include developing more materials showcasing the results and evidence captured in the MERMAID monitoring system.



Annex A – Co-financing Table

See [Annex A](#).

Annex B – Programme Milestones by Activities

See [Annex B](#).

Annex C – Solution Case Study

See [Annex C](#).

Annex D – GESI Action Report

See [Annex D](#).

Annex E – Safeguards

See [Annex E](#).