



# CTA-169-Reefs Could Generate Billions

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### Report Finds Investing in Healthy Coral Reefs Could Generate Billions

#### STORY HIGHLIGHTS

ISU, UNEP, ICRI and Trucost collaborated on a study that compares the economic outcomes between a healthy reef scenario and a degraded reef scenario in the Coral Triangle and the Mesoamerican Reef.

The study finds there is a “strong business case” for both the private and public sectors to increase investments in the protection, preservation and enhancement of coral reefs.

6 November 2018: The Prince of Wales’ International Sustainability Unit (ISU), with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP, or UN Environment), the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) and Trucost, released a report that finds a shift to improved coral reef health could unlock an additional US\$35 billion in Mesoamerica and an additional US\$37 billion in Indonesia through coastal development, commercial fisheries and tourism. If the world does not implement recommended policies and investments, the report cautions coral reefs could decline 90 percent within the next 30 years.

The study titled, ‘The Coral Reef Economy,’ compares the economic outcomes between a healthy reef scenario and a degraded reef scenario in the Coral Triangle and the Mesoamerican Reef. The healthy reef scenario assumes that increased investment in protection and preservation will return reefs to a healthy state. In a degraded reef scenario, coral reef health would continue to decline from current levels. The study finds there is a “strong business case” for both the private and public sectors to increase investments in the protection, preservation and enhancement of coral reefs.

According to the report, the world has already lost at least one-fifth of the world’s coral reefs. Climate change, ocean acidification, overfishing and destructive fishing and various land-based activities all threaten coral reef health. The report finds that if coral reefs continue to decline in line with historical trends, the value of coral reefs to key sectors could decrease by US\$3.1 billion in Mesoamerica and US\$2.2 billion in Indonesia by 2030. These

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losses could have additional effects on local livelihoods and government revenues in the region, resulting in further losses to reef-dependent communities.

*If coral reefs continue to decline in line with historical trends, the value of coral reefs to key sectors could decrease.*

The two scenarios also estimate potential changes in live coral cover, which is considered an indicator of coral reef health. The healthy reef scenario anticipates a 36.4 percent increase in live coral cover in the Coral Triangle by 2030 and a 14.1 percent increase in live coral cover in Mesoamerica by 2030. The degraded reef scenario predicts a decline from 16.6 percent live coral cover in 2017 to 11 percent live coral cover by 2030 in the Coral Triangle and a decline from an average of 3.7 percent live coral cover in 2017 to 1.6 percent in 2030 in Mesoamerica.

The report warns that funding to protect and manage coral reef ecosystems is “insufficient to maintain reef health and meet internationally adopted targets.” Within this context, the report presents a range of interventions and policies that could produce a financial net benefit and positive return on investment for stakeholders. The study analyzes four strategic interventions: no-take marine protected areas (MPAs); afforestation for erosion management; constructed wetlands to enhance wastewater management; and vegetative filter strips to reduce erosion on cropland. All four of these interventions would also support achievement of SDG 14 (life below water) as well as contribute to SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) and SDG 15 (life on land).

The report argues that a shift towards coral reef health can be achieved through strategic interventions using already available tools and methods. As an illustration, the expansion of no-take MPAs in Mesoamerica could generate a 44 to 1 return on investment. The report also underscores the environmental and social benefits of restoring coral reef ecosystems, including biodiversity conservation and cultural reasons. [Publication: [The Coral Reef Economy](#)] [[UN Environment Press Release](#)]

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- Marine Life Alert (MLA)
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- Natural Science Reports (NSR)
- Oil Spill Alerts (OSA)
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