

2014 MAR Leadership cohort farewell:

Final workshop in Belize

The Fourth Workshop of the 2014 Cohort, was held in Belize City, Belize from April 26th to May 3rd, 2015. In addition to the trainings that Fellows received, this dynamic workshop connected Fellows with international experts, and strengthened the MAR Leadership network, enabling new synergies, and empowering the existing ones. As in previous workshops, other Fellows from the host country participated, including Nicanor Requena and Angeline Valentine (2011 MAR Fellows), Leonel Requena, Adriel Castaneda and Joel Green (2012 MAR Fellows).

The workshop started with training on advocacy delivered by Lori Maddox (ELAW¹). The analysis of real case studies in the four MAR countries was presented by other ELAW members, such as Alejandra Serrano (CEMDA²), Janelle Chanona (Oceana), Judge Antoinette Moore, Clarisa Vega (IDAMHO³), and Jeanette Noack (ADA2⁴).

The goal of this training was to develop a wide and purposeful vision of public policies in MAR Fellows, and help strengthen their capacity to influence society and decision making processes.

As it has been done in former workshops, a Symposium on Integrated Solid Waste Management in the MAR countries was held in Belmopan, which allowed an exchange of ideas and agreements between government authorities, MAR Fellows, experts, and members of various social sectors of the host country, who share an interest in preventing the impacts of inadequate management of solid waste in the MAR. Regional and national efforts regarding sustainability on solid waste management were presented.

Fellows were also trained on institutional development and resource mobilization by Annette Candanedo, which motivated the analysis of the challenges that social organizations face in achieving their own sustainability. Annette helped Fellows understand how to leverage the resources of their organizations, how to find innovative and creative alternatives for income generation and diversification of financing sources for their projects, and how to professionalize and strengthen their institutions.

MAR Fellows presented the progressed made in their projects, the big changes that they are all already achieving in their communities, and future plans.



Hihlight of the 2014 cohort

1) New skills and knowledge: 13 fellows have been trained on project design, fundraising, strategic communications, personal development, negotiated solutions/conflict resolution, and public policy advocacy. This bundle of skills is designed to assist Fellows in the design and execution of their projects. Three Fellows have advanced to positions of greater influence and responsibility in their current organization. Fellows have raised funds from governmental sources, Foundations, and a local NGO to launch their projects. Several of

¹ Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide.

² Mexican Center for Environmental Law.

³ Honduras Institute for Environmental Law

⁴ Alianza de Derecho Ambiental y Agua

them have become advocates inside important public policy reform processes. For instance, Melissa Alvarez is leading the adaptation of a national policy for integrated waste and sewage management in Guatemala; and Lemuel Vega is leading the development of a new regulation that includes a solid waste generation assessment as a pre-requisite to securing permits for startup businesses in Cozumel.

2) Sustainable Materials Management as a guiding model for Fellows' projects: 7 projects on Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) have been launched in five communities (Cozumel and Holbox islands in Mexico; Punta Gorda in Belize; Livingston in Guatemala; and Roatan Island in Honduras) contributing to the regional vision of reducing plastic waste in the MAR by 30% in the next 3-5 five years. SMM projects emphasize source reduction, materials reuse, composting, recycling, local job creation, and regional economic development. Fernando del Valle, Tzahyri and Denisse have contributed in rehabilitating Holbox Island transfer station. It has been cleaned up and employees have been trained and equipped. In the last several months 8 tons of waste has been transferred to the mainland for recycling. Incineration has been an issue of concern in Holbox. In addition, students from Holbox schools are recycling PET bottles by converting them into hammocks and roofs. They are also transforming paper, glass, and cardboard into arts and crafts for educational purposes. Given the small size but biological importance of Holbox, these actions have measurably reduced the waste discarded in the transfer station, which can be a leaching hazard for the reef.

3) Networking opportunities and synergies: 7 multi-sector conservation partnerships arise from relationships developed as part of the 2014 cohort. An example is the collaboration between Emerson García from Belize and Mario Salazar from Guatemala who are working on a strategy to transport recoverable materials from Punta Gorda, Belize to Puerto Barrios in Guatemala where they will be recycled. Tzahyri from Holbox and Lemuel from Cozumel are implementing a new initiative based on zero plastic zones where they are replacing disposable plastic bottles with reusable bottles which will significantly reduce waste production in their communities. Lemuel is collecting the iron-man and other sports events plastic bottles that are in good shape and is delivering them to Tzahyri who is introducing them in schools. Fellows have been linked to international mentors who have strengthening their MAR project, and helped fellows with their current job and responsibilities. Laura Palmese from Honduras participated as a speaker at the Summit on Sustainable Materials Management organized by the U.S. National Recycling Coalition, in collaboration with the Center of Syracuse University the Sustainable Community Solutions and the Center for Environmental Finance of the University of Maryland. She learned about successful experiences in implementing the SMM and had the opportunity to meet several members of the Recycling Coalition of Puerto Rico who will be visiting her in Roatan in supporting her project in Roatan. During a Solid Waste Management Forum, the Bay Islands Governor and the mayors of the two municipalities on Roatan Island signed an unprecedented agreement to collaborate with the sustainable management of materials project and support Fellows projects.

2015 Call for applications

The central goal of the 2015 MAR Leadership Program is to conserve 20% of the existing mangrove cover in the (MAR) over the next five years by reducing deforestation and degradation of mangrove ecosystem services (ecotourism, coastal protection, fisheries, blue carbon, aquifer protection) and addressing threats to mangroves through a range of strategies and projects advanced by selected Fellows. In support of this goal, the Program will:

- Define a mangrove coverage baseline (locally or regionally) and facilitate ongoing monitoring;
- Conduct valuation of mangrove ecosystem services and normalize these values into policy and management decisions across the four MAR countries;
- Advance conservation actions that foster collaboration and increase protection for mangroves;
- Strengthen government involvement towards compliance with laws and regulations that protect mangroves;
- Foster development of new public policies, laws or regulations as needed or appropriate;
- Lay the foundation to disseminate and replicate successful strategies and projects to regional scales across the MAR.

The call for applications closes on July 15th. We are excited and looking forward to receiving plenty of applications from candidates in the MAR countries.

What are MAR Fellows up to?

Roatan-Cancun binational conferences

In June, binational conferences between elementary schools in Roatan and Cancun were held. 2014 MAR Fellows Cindy Flores (Honduras) and Monica Alba (Mexico) connected two schools for the second time this year, and they plan to continue with more groups of different ages and also with teachers. The topics discussed during the conferences were focused on the importance of the coastal ecosystems shared by both countries as well as how solid waste has become a threat to the ecosystem. Children from both countries shared messages and solutions.

Environmental education focused on youth is the cornerstone of Cindy and Monica's leadership projects. Technology has become the means of communication that brings awareness on solid waste out of the classroom and that can be replicated throughout the region. It is expected that Cindy and Monica can trace a training plan according to the teachers and students' needs in the Sandy Bay School to strengthen the SMM program (Sustainable Materials Management). Cindy together with Laura Palmese will begin framing the baseline of waste generation in the school to feed into their project and into Monica's project: the online learning platform. This platform –will share trainings as well as information about SMM and downloadable teaching materials, all tropicalized into a context of SMM in the MAR.



Cindy and Laura: news from Roatan

In June BICA Roatán (Bay Island Conservation Association) celebrated the Oceans Day with a workshop organized by Cindy Flores (2014 MAR Fellow, Honduras) who is the environmental educator. The workshop focused on ocean pollution in the school Modelo of Sandy Bay. The event was also attended by school teachers of West End and staff of the Department of Education of the Bay Islands Department. Activities also included a beach cleanup with teachers. *Teachers were shocked with videos and photos that we shared and every day they are more and more convinced that we must act, and that one of the first solutions to this problem is to raise awareness and take responsibility* – says Cindy.



VIII Environment Education World Congress

World Environmental Education Congress – WEEC – is an international congress addressing education for environment and sustainable development. It is the meeting point for everyone working in education for environment and sustainable development or who have an interest in the field. *WEEC2015 is an opportunity*

to learn more about the latest developments in environmental and sustainability education, to share your own work with people from all over the world and to learn from others.

As part of her individual training funds, the MAR Leadership Program supported Monica Alba (2014 MAR Fellow, Mexico) to attend WEEC2015, to be held from June 29 to July 2 in Gothenburg, Sweden. The Congress theme is "Planet and People - strategies for living together". Monica submitted two abstracts that were accepted for oral presentation: Mesoamerican Reef Leadership Program: Building a New Generation of Environmental Leaders and Connecting Initiatives for a Healthy Reef: a virtual learning platform on Sustainable Materials Management for the Mesoamerican Reef Ecoregion.

You can see these abstracts and more at: <https://b-com.mci-group.com/AbstractList/150604WEEC.aspx>



Vicente

Vicente Ferreyra (2010 MAR Fellow, Mexico) was recently appointed Project Manager for the Mesoamerican Reef Tourism Initiative (MARTI). Vicente's tasks will be to coordinate MARTI's partners in the four MAR countries, to create a monitoring and evaluation system, to promote the establishment of strategic alliances for the initiative, fundraising support, and communication of achievements.

, In addition, Vicente is supporting the Mesoamerican Reef office of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) based in Guatemala to develop the brand and communication strategy of MAR Destination. The destination seeks to bring together community tourism initiatives in the four MAR countries (with emphasis on Guatemala and Honduras but with a regional vision) and allow these initiatives to have more outward visibility, and to have a common image to appeal to niche markets.



Carlos

Carlos Segura (2012 MAR Fellow, Mexico) is advising the Municipality of Solidaridad (where Playa del Carmen is located) with its Climate Change Strategy to report to the CDP (Carbon Disclosure Project) in the Cities project. CDP is an international, not-for-profit organisation providing the only global system for companies and cities to measure, disclose, manage and share their environmental information. Through CDP, cities around the world are measuring, monitoring and managing their impact on the environment. Over the past five years, CDP has worked with 207 cities to manage over one billion metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions. CDP's cities program demonstrates that cities are better managing their risk and

increasing resiliency through more than 2,000 activities to mitigate and adapt to climate change. See more at: <https://www.cdp.net/cities>.

Following this Climate Change Strategy, the Municipality of Solidaridad is the 4th nationwide town to report to CDP and opens opportunities to participate in the 21th Conference of Parties (COP) in Paris (<http://www.cop21paris.org/>)



Kim

2011 MAR Fellow Kim Ley Cooper (Mexico) has completed the writing of his Ph.D thesis at the Curtin University of Technology, in Perth, Australia! His research was partially performed through his MAR Leadership project: *Adding value to MAR ecosystems, a holistic approach to its fisheries*. This project seeks to generate socio-economic incentives for sustainable fishing and monitoring through the implementation of artificial shelters for spiny lobster and the restoration of Biosphere Reserves in Banco Chinchorro and Sian Kaan. We share some of the results published in the paper: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17451000.2012.727434>.

Giacomo

In June 2012 MAR Fellow Giacomo Palavicini (Mexico) won the Award as Sea Hero by the Scuba Diving magazine <http://www.scubadiving.com/> The magazine is acknowledging his hard work in marine conservation as Director of Roatan Marine Park.



Fellows' projects impacts

Maya Ka'an, 2010 Fellow **Vicente Ferreyra's** project is a new community tourism destination in the Mexican Caribbean that has integrated 17 (tourism cooperatives) in nine locations covering three municipalities in central Quintana Roo. In three years the project has trained 400 people from the communities of the Maya Zone of Quintana Roo, certified more than 30 tour guides under the NOM 009 on specialized nature tourism, and has certified 10 companies as sustainable ecotourism companies under the norm NMX 133 Ecotourism Sustainability. 5,000 people have benefited indirectly from the project in

three years. It has generated a promotional advertising impact target in more than 100 publications in media with an estimated impact of \$60,000 USD.

2012 Fellow **Cleopatra Méndez** project: Designing a Participative, Community-Based Coastal/Marine Reserve in Cocoli Bay started in 2012. The project seeks to map the shallow areas of seagrass within Cocoli Bay and ban trawling in the area. Since 2012, three committees of fishermen have been created from which 2 developed a livelihood project. Jointly with 2011 Fellow Ana Giro from Guatemala through Healthy Reefs Initiative have trained 7 fishermen and 2 fisherwomen in open water diving and monitoring techniques; these fishermen are involved in biological research and today are convinced that the work they do is important to conserve the marine resources. Through her work as TRIGOH coordinator, she was able to promote the declaration of marine refuges at the regional level in the three countries; Belize, Guatemala and Honduras.

After losing more than 90% of its mangrove cover over a decade ago due to hurricane Mitch, the island of Guanaja (Honduras) is seeing an important recovery thanks to 2012 Fellow **Mariela Ochoa**'s commitment and the more than 250 volunteers that have planted over 89,000 mangrove propagules and recovered 5 hectares. Mariela has contributed in getting the support of the Center for Marine Studies (CEM), The Nature Conservancy, the Municipality of Guanaja and BICA, for the establishment of the Environmental Protection Fund of the island of Guanaja. Part of these financial resources will be allocated for: mangrove reforestation, environmental education and conservation activities. Mariela has raised local funding from Forest Protection Committee of Guanaja Island and the Credit Union of Guanaja, Wilmont Bay. She has been invited to submit a new proposal by New England Biolabs Foundation.