



MAR Leadership End-of-Year Update December 2013

Program Director Maru Arreola,
evaluation team, MAR Fellows, and
community members during site visits for
the external evaluation of MAR
Leadership in February 2013

BUILDING CAPACITIES & STRENGTHENING NETWORKS FOR CONSERVATION

MAR Leadership Evaluation and Recommendations

While in 2013 we continued building capacities through two in-person workshops, organizing individual courses/trainings, assisting in fundraising and networking, and following up on project implementation of all three existing cohorts, this has also been a year of self-reflection, analysis, and a lot of learning based on our experiences over the last three years. An external evaluation of the program's impact was carried out by [Leadership Learning Community](#) of Oakland, CA.

Leadership Learning Community (LLC) recognizes that the program is delivering results and affirming the premise that emerging leaders can be successfully supported to implement new and replicable projects that can contribute significantly to the health of the MAR. MAR-L has the potential to push the envelope on these successes and chart new territory in leadership development. In

order to achieve this, the evaluators made a series of recommendations, some of which are summarized below, with comments in italics on how MAR-L will address them.

- a) Put a stronger stake in the ground around concrete goals and build for continued network growth and success.
 - *In this regard, with an expert consultant on solid waste and conservation in the region, we will design an umbrella project with clear and specific goals that aims to provide solutions to the problem of solid waste generation and management in the four MAR countries.*
- b) Making progress on complex problems requires aligning diverse efforts within a system. To achieve collective impact, fellows will need

collaborative capacity and systems thinking.

- *We will design a curriculum where these components will be delivered to fellows during in-person workshops.*
- c) The program is great at recruiting talented, mostly young individuals from the MAR region. If the program focuses on more specific goals, it may shift recruitment focus to the cohort mix needed to achieve that result.
 - *With the 2010, 2011 and 2012 cohorts, we faced challenges in aligning projects. To meet these challenges, for the 2014 cohort we organized a meeting with experts on solid waste in the four MAR countries; their input will allow us to design goals, outcomes, and outputs that will guide our selection and orient the cohort.*

Strategic Planning

In July 2013, following the presentation of the evaluation results, MAR Leadership's Executive Committee and staff gathered to carry out a strategic planning exercise. MAR Leadership's mission was revised to better reflect our ultimate purpose to: "Foster a healthy reef with thriving communities." We seek to achieve this mission by strengthening the strategic skills, competencies, and networking opportunities of emerging conservation leaders from Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico (Quintana Roo) to implement innovative and effective conservation projects that will contribute to the health and ecological sustainability of the Mesoamerican Reef.

Essentially, the outcome we seek requires a change attitudes and behaviors in the general population. Through MAR Leadership, in the short term we expect that fellows use their skills and competencies effectively to create projects destined for success and provide strong leadership in their organizations. In the medium term, training conservationists in the MAR Leadership Program will result in successful conservation projects and reef stakeholders with strengthened conservation capacities. If we succeed in reaching these milestones, in the long term fellows' work will achieve a positive change in stakeholders' behavior, and there will be innovative legal frameworks and public policies in place. Socioeconomic activities will not affect the integrity of natural capital, and our mission will be fulfilled.



Visiting Mariela Ochoa's mangrove restoration project in Guanaja for the MAR Leadership external evaluation

2014 Plans

On October 29 we held a work session about solid waste management in the MAR countries. Fifteen people who work in solid waste management in the region participated.

From the meeting we got a better understanding of the situation and tendencies of disposal and management of solid waste in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico; a proposed umbrella project over 5-10 years that will serve as a strategic guide for the 2014 cohort; and the names of possible candidates to invite to apply for the 2014 cohort of MAR Leadership.

Now we are reviewing the information we have obtained through publications, interviews, and the work session, and we will hire a consultant who will help us ensure that everything is in place to launch a comprehensive call for applications for 2014. The consultant will: 1. carry out a pre-diagnosis to provide information about the state of solid waste management in the four MAR countries; 2. design an umbrella project with a clear and measurable regional goal; 3. propose sites for pilot projects; 4. propose project ideas that could contribute to the regional goal; 5. design the profile of fellows or multisectorial groups; 5. create a training plan for solid waste project design.

News - Late 2013

Adriel Castañeda, 2012 MAR Fellow, used his individual training funds to attend the JICA Training and Dialogue Program: Coastal Fisheries Management, which took place in Yokohama, Japan, from August 4 to October 3. Adriel also used his individual training funds to attend the 66th GCFI conference in Corpus Christi, Texas, from November 4-8. The conference focused on Natural and Artificial Reef Fisheries, Research, and Conservation.

Celso Cawich, 2011 MAR Fellow, was awarded a scholarship to study Marine Science at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji for two years. This is another example of the MAR Leadership network at work, as Celso will work on his thesis with Kim Ley, 2011 MAR Fellow. We wish him good luck in Fiji!

Maru Arreola, Program Director, moved to Cancun to be closer to the MAR region and MAR fellows' projects. The new MAR Leadership Program office is located at: Av. Acanceh SM 11, floor 3-B, office 325, Cancun, Quintana Roo, Mexico.

Carmen Castilla, the program's administrative assistant, will continue working from the Mexico City offices.



A draft theory of change – part of our strategic planning exercise

Thank you, donors!

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Thanks and happy holidays from the MAR Leadership Team!



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