



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS REPORT

Caribbean Coral Reef Restoration & Tourism Policy Analysis



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ACRONYMS

ANAMAR:	National Authority of Maritime Affairs
ASONAHORES:	Asociación Nacional de Hoteles y Restaurantes
CEBSE:	Center for the Conservation and Eco-Development of Samaná Bay and its Surroundings
CODOPESCA:	Dominican Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture (in Spanish)
CSR:	Corporate Social Responsibility
Dom Rep:	Dominican Republic
DR:	Dominican Republic
DRC:	Dominican Consortium for Coastal Restoration
EEZ:	Exclusive Economic Zone
ESG:	Environmental, Social, and Governance
FGPC:	Fundación Grupo Punta Cana
FUNDEMAR:	Fundación Dominicana de Estudios Marinos
GIZ:	Agencia de Cooperación Alemana
IANTD:	International Association of Nitrox and Technical Divers
ICZM:	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
IDB:	InterAmerican Development Bank
IKI:	International Initiative for Climate Protection
MITUR:	Ministry of Tourism (in Spanish)
MOE:	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
PADI:	Professional Association of Diving Instructors
RAD:	Dominican Reef Network (in Spanish)
WB:	World Bank

NB: Reef Restoration when used within this report refers to Coral Reef Restoration

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

The Dominican Republic stands at a crucial juncture in the conservation and restoration of its coral reefs, which are not only ecological treasures but also pillars of the national economy. This report analyses the present coral reef restoration policy environment in the Dominican Republic, offering a distilled view of the current policy and coral reef restoration strategies, their efficacy, and the challenges that impede progress in safeguarding these vital marine ecosystems. It is designed to provide policymakers, stakeholders, and conservation entities with a synthesis of the present policy environment, critical insights into the existing gaps and potential leverage points, and a strategic outlook for future initiatives with the participation of the tourism industry.



Coral reefs in the Dominican Republic, while providing a habitat for an extensive array of marine life, also buttress the tourism sector—a key contributor to the country's GDP. The degradation of these reefs poses a significant threat to biodiversity and the economic stability of the tourism and fisheries industries. In response, a variety of restoration initiatives have been undertaken with public, NGO and tourism sector participation, demonstrating a commitment to environmental stewardship and a recognition of the inherent value of these ecosystems.



However, the success of these efforts is consistently challenged by systemic issues such as policy shortfalls, enforcement limitations, and the overarching obstacle of funding. The report aims to illuminate these challenges, offering a critical evaluation of the policy framework that governs coral reef conservation and the practical execution of restoration projects. It identifies the main areas where policy strengthening is needed, where institutional capacity building can be enhanced, and where financial mechanisms can be innovated to ensure the continuity and expansion of restoration efforts.

The report concludes with a series of tailored recommendations intended to address the identified gaps and to harness opportunities for strengthening the resilience of coral reef ecosystems. By aligning

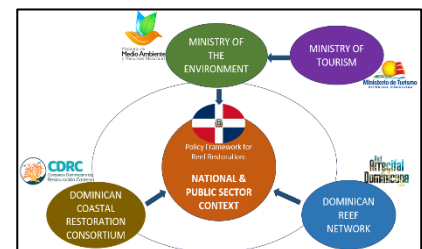
conservation efforts with the economic interests they support, the report advocates for an integrated approach to coral reef management—a strategy that not only preserves the ecological integrity of the reefs but also secures the economic benefits they provide to the Dominican Republic. Ultimately, this report can serve as a foundation for informed decision-making and to catalyze the advancement of effective coral reef restoration and conservation policies that allow the most effective means of tourism industry participation in the Dominican Republic.

2. POLICY FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

Laws: The Dominican Republic's coral reef restoration efforts are guided by a policy framework that is anchored in environmental legislation and national strategies aimed at preserving natural resources while fostering sustainable development. At the forefront of this legal framework are [Laws 64-00 on Environmental and Natural Resources](#) and [202-14 concerning Coastal and Marine foundation for environmental protection](#), mandating the conservation of marine biodiversity and promoting the sustainable use of marine habitats.

Key Public Agencies: Under this legal canopy, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources holds the primary responsibility for overseeing the health of marine ecosystems

within the Dominican Republic. This Ministry along with the Ministry of Tourism serve as the principal



agencies responsible for the implementation and enforcement of conservation policies. Their roles are critical in balancing development with the need to sustain the coral ecosystems that are integral to the nation's environmental heritage and economic prosperity.

The policy framework is further supported by [national strategies and action plans](#) that prioritize coral reef conservation as a key objective. These strategies are designed to address the multifaceted challenges faced by coral reefs, including threats from coastal development, tourism, land-based sources of pollution, and climate change.

Partnerships: The framework aims to foster [inter-agency collaboration](#), encourage stakeholder engagement, and

promote **community participation** in conservation initiatives. International agreements and partnerships also complement domestic policies, allowing the Dominican Republic to leverage global best practices and financial resources for coral reef restoration. The nation is a party to **several international treaties**, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, which reinforce its commitment to safeguarding marine biodiversity.



Challenges: Despite these structured policies and commitments, the Dominican Republic's coral reef restoration framework encounters numerous challenges in its practical application. The policy framework, while comprehensive on paper, often struggles with issues of **enforcement**, consistency in application across different regions within the country, and alignment with local community needs and practices. The translation of national policies into effective local action remains a critical hurdle. Moreover, the framework's success is contingent upon the availability of **adequate financial and human resources**, the establishment of clear guidelines for implementation, and the ongoing assessment of restoration outcomes.

3. POLICY ANALYSIS SUMMARY: GAPS & OPPORTUNITY

The Dominican Republic's policy framework for coral reef restoration exhibits several notable gaps that create opportunities for significant enhancements in conservation efforts. One such gap is the **communication breakdown and functional overlap** between key governmental players, including the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Tourism (MITUR), and CODOPESCA. This lack of synergy leads to weaknesses in the legal structure that supports coral reef restoration, resulting in fragmented efforts and inefficiencies. Moreover, there is an evident overlap of functions within the Ministry of Environment itself, further complicating the governance of coral conservation.

Ministry of Environment: The Ministry of Environment is beleaguered by **institutional capacity and resource constraints**. Notably, there is a dearth of trained marine scientists and coastal engineers critical for the successful design, implementation, and management of coral conservation projects. This shortage limits the country's ability to perform effective oversight and hampers the provision of necessary technical assistance for coral reef restoration initiatives. Additionally, the Ministry struggles with **limited financial resources** and logistical support, which significantly curtails its ability to

undertake extensive restoration and conservation projects and to engage in essential **long-term monitoring and adaptive management practices**.

Ministry of Tourism: On the tourism front, MITUR is charged with the crucial responsibility of fostering responsible tourism practices that benefit coral conservation. However, MITUR's limited enforcement capacity and the lack of a cohesive framework for collaboration with the Ministry of Environment mean that tourism development risks compromising the integrity of the natural resources that draw visitors to the island.

Other influencers: Furthermore, the Dominican Republic faces challenges in implementing Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), an approach which balances natural resource use with sustainable development. Despite having the necessary regulatory tools, the country lacks a comprehensive regulatory framework that effectively integrates disaster risk management and climate change adaptation into a cohesive coastal and marine policy. This results in unclear and overlapping institutional roles and responsibilities, as well as a deficit in the availability of up-to-date, integrated data and risk analyses essential for effective policy design.

Opportunities: The impending approval of a law related to the conservation of the coastal and marine environment, i.e. "Ley Sectorial de Conservación Costera y Marina", signals a pivotal moment for coral conservation regulation in the Dominican Republic. This legislation has the **potential to address many of the current gaps in legal and institutional frameworks**, establishing clearer guidelines for the use and management of coastal and marine ecosystems. Once enacted, it could provide the legal backbone necessary for effective conservation and sustainable use of the nation's coastal and marine resources. It could also stimulate the advancement of digital systems for monitoring coastal and marine resources and prioritize necessary investments for coastal protection.

In addition to the pending law, the opportunities for bridging the identified gaps come from various quarters, including potential collaborations, educational initiatives, and innovative funding mechanisms. For instance, the collaboration between the National Authority of Maritime Affairs (ANAMAR) and the Ministry of Environment holds promise for transforming the National Aquarium



into a center focused on coral reef restoration and marine conservation, leveraging it as a platform for specialized training and public education. Moreover, the country has approval for an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) **loan**, which presents a strategic opportunity to integrate ICZM into national policy and catalyze the synergy between environmental stewardship and tourism

development.

Funding sustainability is another critical area, with innovative funding sources such as blue bonds, carbon credits, specialized sovereign loans, and impact investing emerging as viable options. These financing mechanisms offer new pathways to support coral reef restoration in a sustainable manner, aligning environmental conservation with economic returns. They represent an untapped potential to create a financial ecosystem that supports not only the immediate needs of coral reef restoration but also ensures the long-term preservation and resilience of coral reef ecosystems.

4. OVERVIEW OF KEY POLICY FRAMEWORK INDICATORS

Key policy framework indicators reviewed in the Dominican Republic are summarized in the **Table A**.

5. KEY CONCLUSIONS

The key conclusions of the Policy Analysis for the Dominican Republic are summarized in **Table B**.

6. CRITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The main recommendations of the Policy Analysis for the Dominican Republic are summarized in **Table C**.

TABLE A: OVERVIEW OF KEY POLICY FRAMEWORK INDICATORS: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC					
#	INDICATORS	SUMMARY FINDING	#	INDICATORS	SUMMARY FINDING
1	Key Public Sector/ Governing Bodies Impacting Coral Reef Restoration	(i) Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (ii) Dominican Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Navy (Ministry of Defense)	7	Tourism/ Sustainable Tourism	(i) Limited Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (ii) Tourism/Government Push for more Sustainable Tourism Policy in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment. (iii) The Ministry of Environment leads on any topics related to conservation and the management of natural resources.
2	Key Public Sector Regulatory/Agencies for Tourism	Ministry of Tourism	8	Partnerships for Coral Reef Restoration	(i) Significant NGO/Public/Private Partnerships and Opportunities for Partnership (ii) Consortium for the Dominican Coastal Restoration evolving to a public-private Conservation Trust (iii) Need for sustainable financing
3	Agencies most involved in Coral Reef Restoration related Regulation	Vice Ministry of Coastal and Marine Resources	9	Tourism Private Sector Support for Restoration	(i) Tourism and Private sector operate through NGOs (ii) Best Practice in place but could be updated to integrate innovation and cutting-edge technologies
4	NGOs leading in Coral Reef Restoration Activities & Sensitization	(i) Fundación Grupo Puntacana (ii) FUNDEMAR (iii) TNC (iv) SRC (v) RAD (vi) CEBSE (vii) Iberostar Group	10	Tourism Businesses involved in Coral Reef Restoration	List attached at Annex 1 & include: (i) Grupo Punta Cana at the forefront (ii) Iberostar Group (iii) Cap Cana Group (Recently started) Indirectly through sustainability practices: (iv) Riu and Catalonia Hotels
5	Government Coordination and Procedures	Minimal Public Sector Connection/Linkages between Tourism and Coastal and Marine Conservation and/or Coral Reef Restoration	11	Coral Reef Restoration & Policy	(i) Significant NGO Operation within this space; (ii) No Policy in place for Coral Reef Restoration (iii) Legislation/Policy on the table/in Development (iv) Limited funding / Funding mainly from international grants (v) No institutional capacity
6	Permit/Licen sing Procedures	(i) Friendly Regulatory Framework for Coral Reef Restoration Activities (ii) Agile permitting/licensing procedures (iii) Lack of Public institutional capacity and resources for projects oversight and technical assistance	12	Existing Frameworks for Coral Reef Management, Conservation, and/or Restoration Implementation in Tourism Sector	Currently in development through the DR-L1154 Loan Project "Sustainable Coastal Management" related to the integration of the ICZM.

#	TABLE B: SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC CORAL REEF RESTORATION POLICY ANALYSIS		
	Category	Area	Detail
1	Ecological & Economic Significance	<i>Coral reefs are crucial for biodiversity</i>	The coral reefs of the Dominican Republic (Dom Rep) are not just underwater spectacles; they are biodiversity hotspots. These reefs provide habitat for a myriad of marine species and are integral to maintaining the health of the country's ocean ecosystems.
		<i>Economic backbone for tourism</i>	- The tourism sector, which leans heavily on the natural beauty and recreational opportunities provided by these reefs, is a cornerstone of the Dominican Republic's economy. - The health of the coral reefs is directly tied to the health of the tourism industry and, by extension, the nation's GDP.
		<i>National Emphasis on Conservation</i>	Tourism industry partners involved in coral reef restoration prioritize the ecological and conservation aspects (economic benefits to the industry stakeholders involved are not the priority).
2	Notable Progress Heightened by Collaboration	<i>Positive strides in coral reef restoration</i>	- There has been commendable progress in the restoration of coral reefs in the Dom Rep. - Conservation and restoration activities are continually promoted and supported.
		<i>Importance of collaborative efforts</i>	- The success in coral reef restoration is attributed to the collective efforts of various stakeholders, including local non-governmental organizations, private entities, and international conservation bodies. - The synergy of the collective efforts has been pivotal in advancing restoration techniques and in implementing projects that aim to rehabilitate these delicate marine ecosystems.
		<i>Guidelines for Coral Reef Restoration</i>	Guidelines for coral reef restoration are provided under the partnership of the Dominican Consortium for Reef Restoration (DCRC)
3	Policy Framework	<i>A Balance & Flexible Approach</i>	- The policy framework emphasizes a balanced approach to protect coral ecosystems while enabling sustainable economic development. - The framework <i>allows flexibility for coral reef restoration activities by the tourism industry</i>. - Flexibility within the framework also allows for the integration of new scientific knowledge and technologies.
		<i>Permitting Pro</i>	- A permit that covers a period of 2 years is required for coral reef restoration activities. The cost and processing time frame varies. - Streamlining the permitting process without compromise thoroughness and effectiveness is essential.
		<i>Lack of Bureaucracy</i>	- The current legal framework is <i>not considered to be a bureaucratic one</i>. This lack of bureaucracy is beneficial for rapid and unencumbered restoration actions. - Stakeholders involved in coral reef <i>restoration support the existing framework due to its flexibility and its lack of bureaucracy</i>.
		<i>Coral Reef Restoration & Tourism Legislation</i>	- There is no specific legislation for coral reef restoration by the tourism industry or any that specifically targets the participation of the tourism stakeholder. - Still, the current policy framework does not debar participation of the tourism industry
4	Capacity	Institutional capacity Limitations	The institutions tasked with overseeing and managing coral reef restoration often face challenges due to limited capacity. This is manifested as a lack of technical expertise, inadequate manpower, or insufficient logistical support.
5	Funding	Funding Shortages	- A major hurdle for coral reef restoration is the lack of sufficient funding. Restoration projects are often expensive and require sustained investment. - The scarcity of financial resources limits the scale and scope of restoration initiatives.
		Innovative Funding Sources	Multiple Stakeholder Partnership Conservation Trusts, Blue Bonds, Carbon Credits, Specialized Sovereign Loans, Impact Investing and Tourism Industry Taxes are potential mechanisms for sustainable financial support for coral reef restoration.
6	Overall Position	<i>Policy gaps</i>	While there have been advancements, there are still significant gaps in the policy framework that governs coral reef conservation and restoration. These gaps may hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of restoration efforts.

#	TABLE C: SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS	
	Action	Details
1	Strengthen Policy Framework	- Develop and enforce a comprehensive national policy that supports coral reef conservation and sustainable tourism practices without creating a burdensome bureaucratic system: - MITUR should increase support to the Ministry of the Environment and Marine Resources to promote sustainable tourism including activities such as ecosystems conservation and coral reef restoration. - With a focus on enforcing the inter-institutional agreement, MITRU should actively collaborate with the Ministry of Environment and engage coral reef restoration stakeholders, including CDRC and RAD members, to ensure that the proposed policy framework is in alignment with the Coral Reef Restoration Framework, Best Practices, and national conservation goals¹.
	Reef Restoration Guidelines for Tourism	Continuous updates of the current guidelines for coral nurseries including diver education, and regulate tourism activities to minimize ecological impact should be facilitated.
2	Increase Institutional Capacity	- Invest in training and resources to build the capacity of local institutions managing coral reef restoration and conservation programs in the public sector and private/tourism industry. - The Ministry of Environment will need to identify sustainable funding sources to increase institutional capacity.
3	Sustainable Tourism Practices	MITUR should increase resources to promote, build awareness, encourage and implement practices that minimize environmental impact and promote the health of coral reefs.
4	Community Engagement and Education	Build on the existing relationships that the tourism industry in the Dom Rep has with its local communities to further engage these stakeholders in coral reef restoration efforts through education and by providing ongoing opportunities for active participation.
5	Funding and Investment	- Secure sustainable funding sources for coral reef restoration projects, including public-private partnerships and international funding and innovating funding sources like carbon credits, impact investing and blue bonds. - Provide incentives for local businesses participating in reef conservation
6	Research and Monitoring	Support ongoing research and long-term monitoring of coral reef health to inform management strategies and measure the effectiveness of restoration efforts.
7	Climate Change Mitigations	- Address broader environmental issues such as climate change, which significantly impact coral reefs, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions through carbon credits mechanisms and enhancing the resilience of marine ecosystems. - Demonstrate and emphasize the role of coral reef restoration in achieving the climate change commitments of the country
8	Enforcement of Regulations	- Ensure that existing regulations to protect coral reefs are adequately enforced, particularly in areas of urban development and tourism. - Utilize a Public/Private and community engagement and collaborative approach for enforcement and to reporting and preventing infractions.
9	Collaborative Efforts	- Build upon and/or expand the existing collaborative approach among government agencies, NGOs, the tourism sector, and international partners to scale up coral reef restoration and conservation efforts. - Increase partnerships for oversight and funding of coral reef restoration pro
10	Innovative Techniques	Explore and implement innovative coral reef restoration techniques, including assisted reproduction and the sustainability of existing coral labs, to enhance recovery rates of coral populations including the use of cutting-edge technologies like AI, robotics, blockchain.
11	Knowledge sharing & cooperation	Organize a Regional Policy Dialogue on Coral Reef Restoration to discuss regulatory frameworks, best practices, institutional capacity, governance, and innovative funding mechanisms, aiming to exchange knowledge, attract donors, and foster cooperation.

Based on the recommendations, the report also summarizes, strategic guidelines specific to each of the following:

- (i) National Public Sector Agencies in the Dominican Republic;
- (ii) Tourism Businesses and Private Sector Agencies operating in the Dom Rep; and
- (iii) NGOs and Funding/Development Agencies with interests in the Dom Rep.

¹ In the Dominican Republic, the responsibility for enforcing national policies for coral reef restoration lies with the Ministry of Environment (MARENA), not the Ministry of Tourism (MITUR). MITUR's primary focus is on promoting tourism, including sustainable practices, and supporting MARENA in various capacities. While MITUR is not interested in enforcing national policies for coral reef restoration, they are keen on supporting MARENA and encouraging the private sector to engage in environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices and sustainable initiatives. However, it should be noted that MITUR does not have the authority to enforce these policies.

KEY GUIDELINES FOR NATIONAL PUBLIC SECTOR AGENCIES IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

#	Policy/Strategic Support Area	Detail
1	Integrated Coastal Zone Management Policy Framework	• Development of a coordinated cross-sector approach to establish a comprehensive Integrated Coastal Zone Management Policy Framework that integrates disaster risk management and climate change adaptation into coastal and marine policies. This should clarify institutional roles and responsibilities, reducing overlap and confusion. • Develop a Comprehensive Regulatory Framework: Establish a clear, comprehensive framework Enhance Data Integration and Accessibility: Invest in modern, digital systems for monitoring coastal and marine resources, and ensure the availability of updated, integrated data and risk analyses. This will support more effective policy design and decision-making. • Prioritize Investment in Coastal Management: that stimulates the identification of adaptation opportunities and investments for coastal protection, addressing the current deficit in financing for sustainable management of coastal zones including coral reef restoration. Identify and prioritize necessary investments and measures for managing coastal areas and mitigating risks, including infrastructure improvements and community-based adaptation strategies.
2	Ley Sectorial de Conservación Costera y Marina	• Enhance Interagency Coordination: Establish a central coordinating body to oversee the implementation of the law, ensuring clarity and consistency across various institutional mandates. This body should work to integrate efforts and streamline responsibilities to prevent overlap and inefficiencies in the management of coral conservation projects. • Prioritize and Expedite Legislative Approval: Increase the prioritization of coral conservation within the national agenda by actively promoting the economic, environmental, and social benefits of the proposed law. Employ strategic communication and advocacy to expedite the legislative process, emphasizing the urgent need for updated and robust legal frameworks to protect coastal and marine ecosystems. • Technology and Education: Develop and invest in an updated, integrated digital monitoring system that supports real-time data collection and analysis for informed decision-making in coral conservation. Simultaneously, encourage the creation of specialized educational programs and training in marine sciences to build local capacity for the effective design, supervision, and management of coral reef restoration and conservation initiatives.
3	Technical assistance, M&E System for Coral Reef Restoration	• Enhance Technical Expertise: Prioritize the development of human capital through targeted education and training initiatives aimed at cultivating a pool of proficient marine scientists and coastal engineers. This workforce will be instrumental in the sophisticated design, meticulous implementation, and comprehensive management of coral reef restoration projects. • Boost Financial and Operational Support: Increase funding and logistical resources for the Ministry of Environment. This augmentation is crucial not only for expanding the reach and impact of coral reef restoration projects but also for establishing robust systems for ongoing monitoring and adaptive management of coral ecosystems.
4	Partnerships & Inter-Institutional Collaboration	• Establish and Strengthen Partnerships: Formulate and maintain robust, formal collaborations with public agencies, NGOs, and private sector stakeholders involved in coastal and marine management. These partnerships should focus specifically on coral reef restoration to ensure unified and effective action. • Integrate and Align Restoration Efforts: Work collaboratively across all sectors to promote, support, and expand coral reef restoration activities. This includes harmonizing goals and methodologies to streamline efforts and maximize impact. • Capitalize on Existing Networks: Enhance partnerships by leveraging existing relationships with private sector tourism entities and businesses engaged in coral reef restoration. Focus on joint promotion, capacity building, and training initiatives to bolster collective expertise and resources. • Lead Policy and Funding Initiatives: Take a leadership role in organizing and engaging stakeholders in national and regional policy dialogues and working groups. These should aim to address key issues in coral reef restoration, including policy formulation, funding mechanisms, and the dissemination of best practices. • Secure and Diversify Funding: Collaborate with partners, especially within the tourism sector, to identify and secure funding opportunities that support the scaling and sustainability of coral reef restoration projects.
5	Awarding	• Recognise business and NGO leadership in Coral Reef Restoration

POLICY & STRATEGY GUIDELINES FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES & PRIVATE SECTOR AGENCIES

#	Policy/ Strategy Area	Detail
1	Sustainability Leadership	• Continuously uphold and promote sustainability as a core business policy by actively supporting ecosystem conservation efforts, including coral reef restoration, to enhance natural capital and reinforce the company's commitment to environmental stewardship.
2	ESG Standards	• Integrate ESG Standards into Business Operations: Tourism businesses should adopt and integrate ESG standards that specifically address marine conservation. This includes developing policies that minimize environmental impact and promote sustainable practices such as waste reduction, water conservation, and responsible interactions with marine life. Businesses should also engage in financing restoration projects, such as coral planting and support for marine protected areas.
3	Advocacy	• Engage More Actively with Industry Associations: Increase involvement with the Hotel Business Association ASONAHORES and the Sustainability Committee. Use these platforms to advocate for stronger environmental policies and practices within the industry, ensuring that sustainability is at the forefront of all tourism-related activities. • Participate in Policy Dialogue: Take a proactive role in policy discussions, particularly those related to the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Policy Framework and Ley Sectorial de Conservación Costera y Marina. By participating in these dialogues, businesses can help shape policies that are conducive to sustainable tourism and ecosystem conservation. • Promote and Support Sustainable Practices: Encourage the adoption of sustainable practices through advocacy and by setting examples in their operations. This includes supporting regulations that protect natural habitats, reduce pollution, conserve resources, and ensure that tourism benefits the local economy and ecosystems. • Recognise business leadership in Conservation and Sustainability including Coral Reef Restoration
4	Partnership	• Form Strategic Alliances with Conservation Organizations: Collaborate with environmental nonprofits and conservation groups including the Dominican Reef network and the Dominican Consortium for Coastal Restoration that have a proven track record in marine and coral ecosystem conservation. These partnerships can provide technical expertise, additional resources, and enhanced credibility for your conservation initiatives. Engaging in cause-related marketing and commercial co-ventures can also help spread the word about your efforts and impact, attracting more support and visibility. • Engage in Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives: Participate in forums and collaborations that bring together various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and other businesses. This approach helps in aligning goals, sharing best practices, and pooling resources for larger impact projects. It also ensures that efforts are not duplicated and that the strategies employed are comprehensive and cover multiple aspects of ecosystem conservation. • Support Community-Based Conservation Efforts: Work closely with local communities and support initiatives that involve them directly in conservation activities. This could include training programs, sustainable tourism practices, and community-led monitoring and restoration projects. Engaging local communities not only helps in building local capacity but also ensures the sustainability of conservation efforts through enhanced stewardship and ownership.
5	Coral Reef Restoration Networks	• Join the Dominican Consortium for Coastal Restoration and the Dominican Reef Network as a strategic means to build synergies for coral reef restoration and for easy facilitation of coral reef restoration activities within the regulatory requirements of government
6	Funding Opportunities	• Establish a Conservation Trust: Develop a conservation trust specifically aimed at funding coral reef restoration and other marine conservation efforts. This trust can be structured to manage and disburse funds transparently, ensuring that investments are directed towards impactful and sustainable projects. Engaging a professional board and fund manager can help in maintaining accountability and effectiveness. • Issue Corporate Blue Bonds: Explore the possibility of issuing corporate blue bonds, which are debt instruments that raise capital for marine and ocean-based projects with environmental benefits. These bonds can attract investors interested in sustainable development and provide a steady stream of funding for long-term conservation projects. • Leverage Carbon Credit Markets: Participate in carbon markets to finance conservation efforts. By quantifying the carbon sequestration capabilities of restored or protected marine ecosystems, businesses can generate carbon credits. These credits can then be sold on compliance or voluntary carbon markets, providing an additional revenue stream that supports ongoing conservation activities. • Engage with Insurance and Reinsurance Companies: Collaborate with insurance and reinsurance companies to develop nature-positive insurance products. These products can provide funding for restoration and conservation through premiums and potentially pay out in restoration efforts following environmental damage, thus securing financial support for proactive and reactive conservation measures.

POLICY & STRATEGY GUIDELINES FOR NGOS & FUNDING/DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

#	Policy/ Strategy Area	Detail
1	Technical Leadership	● Continue to strengthen leadership in coral reef restoration by forming strategic partnerships with local businesses, government bodies, international conservation organizations, and academia to facilitate resource sharing, drive innovative restoration techniques, and influence policy-making for sustainable marine practices in the Dominican Republic.
2	Advocacy	● Sensitize and advise Governments, the private sector and other stakeholders on the benefits and status of coral reefs and the policy, action plan and strategic approaches best suited to the restoration and continued health of the reef ecosystem across the country ● Participate in Policy Dialogue: Take a proactive role in organising and leading policy discussions, particularly those related to the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Policy Framework and Ley Sectorial de Conservación Costera y Marina. By participating in these dialogues, NGOs can help shape policies that are conducive to Coral Reef Restoration. ● Conservation Awards: Work closely with public and private sectors to recognise stakeholder leadership in Coral Reef Restoration
3	Capacity Development & Training	● Build Multi-Sector Capacity on Coral Reef Restoration: NGOs should lead initiatives to train and build capacity among various stakeholders, including government agencies, local businesses, and other NGOs. This could involve organizing workshops, seminars, and hands-on training sessions that cover the technical aspects of coral reef restoration. By sharing knowledge and skills with a broad range of participants, NGOs can foster a collaborative approach to reef conservation, ensuring that all parties are equipped with the latest methodologies and technologies for effective restoration. ● Continuously Update and Disseminate Best Practices: It is essential for NGOs to stay at the forefront of coral reef restoration by continuously updating their knowledge and practices based on the latest scientific research and field data. This involves not only adapting their own practices but also actively contributing to the broader community's understanding by updating guidelines and best practices. NGOs can achieve this by participating in international coral reef conferences, publishing in scientific journals, and creating open-access resources that disseminate updated restoration techniques and case studies to the global conservation community.
4	Partnership	● Strengthen your involvement in the Dominican Consortium for Coastal Restoration and the Dominican Reef Network as a strategic means to build synergies for coral reef restoration and for easy facilitation of coral reef restoration activities within the regulatory requirements of government.
5	Funding Opportunities	● Develop a Comprehensive Conservation Trust: Establish a Conservation Trust that includes partnerships with both private sector entities and public sector agencies. This trust should aim to pool resources from various stakeholders, including tourism businesses benefiting from healthy reefs, local and national government bodies, and international donors. The trust can serve as a robust financial mechanism to manage and allocate funds specifically for coral reef restoration and conservation projects. ● Explore Multiple Financing Avenues: Actively pursue diverse funding sources such as bilateral and multilateral aid, grants from international conservation agencies, and innovative financing mechanisms like blue bonds and carbon credits. These funds can be instrumental in scaling up reef restoration efforts and ensuring their sustainability. Engaging with financial advisors or consultants who specialize in environmental finance can help identify and secure these opportunities effectively.

7. REPORT OUTLINE

The policy analysis for the Dominican Republic is presented and discussed under the following six sections:

1. INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

This section looks at the objectives of the report and provides context in terms of background on the importance and threat to coral reefs in the Dominican

Republic, the overall strategy to addressing reef restoration in the country and the position taken by the tourism industry relative to coral reef restoration.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in shaping the analysis is detailed in this section. It starts by clarifying the definitions used throughout the report to ensure that interpretations remain consistent. It further outlines the data collection approaches, the analysis and assessment framework adopted, and details on the stakeholders that contributed to the analysis.

3. POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR REEF RESTORATION

This section provides the legislative framework including the key regulatory agencies, and Dominican Republic's (Dom Rep) governance structure for reef restoration.

4. REGULATIONS & OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The permitting and application requirements are outlined in this section.

5. ASSESSMENT AND GAP ANALYSIS

This is a key section of the report. All elements of the policy were assessed based on the research undertaken which included feedback from tourism businesses and the stakeholders that regulate and lead reef restoration in the country. Importantly, gaps and opportunities are identified and analyzed. This section also highlights a best practice case study and lessons learnt by stakeholder in the Dom Rep.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The emanating conclusions and recommendations are outlined accordingly in this section.

7. CLOSING STATEMENT

It is evident that the strategic approach to coral reef restoration in the Dom Rep is [skewed more toward conservation – to increase the value of the natural capital](#). Emphasis is not placed on coral reef restoration as an economic activity in which specialized reef restoration packages are offered as paid visitor experiences that can increase restoration efforts. Based on the approach, the focus is, therefore, on the challenge of securing financial sustainability for conservation activities with consideration going into innovative financing mechanisms like blue bonds, carbon credits, impact investing and sovereign loans to fund increased reef restoration activities.

With no specific legal or regulatory framework for the tourism industry's participation in reef restoration coupled with the currently flexible framework and limited public sector monitoring, there is no guarantee that

increased participation of the wider tourism industry will not jeopardize the situation further. The report recognizes, therefore, that, to more effectively enable reef restoration in the Dominican Republic with the increased participation of the tourism industry, a [strengthened policy framework](#) must be considered and the [buy-in of the major stakeholders](#) is necessary.

In the first instance, a strengthened framework would demonstrate public sector leadership in environmental stewardship and would involve one that:

- creates policies that support sustainable tourism practices;
- recognizes the opportunity offered by the involvement of tourism in reef restoration;
- avoids creating an overly burdensome and bureaucratic policy framework and permitting process;
- ensures that the activities of divers contribute positively to coral reef health;
- establishes guidelines for the creation and maintenance of coral nurseries;
- set standards for diver education on reef conservation techniques;
- regulate the number of divers and tours to minimize ecological impact;
- provides incentives for local businesses that participate in coral reef conservation and restoration efforts; and
- establishes partnerships between government entities, non-profits, and dive operators to oversee and fund restoration projects.

By aligning conservation goals with economic incentives, such a framework would not only protect and restore coral ecosystems but also support the local economy through responsible tourism.

Finally, in the second instance, and in moving ahead, the report highly recommends that a [Regional Policy Dialogue on Coral Reef Restoration](#) is organized in which stakeholders from the Dominican Republic are invited to participate. This Dialogue would help to discuss regulatory frameworks, best practices, institutional capacity, governance, and innovative funding mechanisms, and should aim to exchange knowledge, attract donors, and foster cooperation. Most importantly, it will allow greater buy-in by stakeholders in the Dominican Republic to strengthen the country's policy framework to specifically facilitate coral reef restoration with the participation of the tourism industry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Our profound gratitude is extended to the following organizations and their dedicated representatives that collectively contributed to the robustness of this report:

From the Non-Profit Sector: ●The Nature Conservancy's Caribbean Division, notably Francisco Nunez, whose efforts were crucial in granting us access to the Dominican Republic Coral Reef Restoration space, thereby providing an invaluable platform for our research and policy development. ●The Nature Conservancy Dominican Republic, represented by Carlos Garcia and Aldo Crocquer, for their support in connecting us with local stakeholders critical for our field research and for enriching our understanding with essential local context.

From the Tourism and Hospitality Industry: ●The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association, and its lead representative on this project, Frank Comito, whose pivotal role was instrumental in facilitating our engagement with key industry players within the Dominican Republic Coral Reef Restoration sector. ●Fundación Grupo Puntacana, with Jake Kheel leading the charge, who has played a fundamental role in sharing his profound knowledge of the foundation's trailblazing work in coral reef restoration. His insights have given us a comprehensive view of the field, tracing its evolution over the past 15 years and highlighting Fundación Grupo Puntacana's influential position within the Dominican Consortium for Coastal Restoration. ●Iberostar Group, and Victor Galan for presenting their commendable initiatives in environmental sustainability and marine ecosystem conservation, which are inspiring other prominent hotel chains to embark on similar paths in the Dominican Republic and the Caribbean. ●The Asociación Nacional de Hoteles y Restaurantes (ASONAHORES) with Aguié Lendor for their efforts to bridge the gap between the hospitality industry and conservation activities

From the Scientific and Environmental Advocacy Community: ●FUNDEMAR, where Rita Sellares contributed her extensive knowledge in marine science and environmental education and significantly enriched the content of our report. Her contributions have not only broadened our understanding but also highlighted critical gaps and opportunities within our

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On-the Ground Consultant: ●The work of the Consultant, Samir Carlos Martinez, in ensuring that the relevant stakeholders were engaged. in analyzing their feedback and in drafting the country report is acknowledged.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS REPORT

Caribbean Coral Reef Restoration & Tourism Policy Analysis



CARIBBEAN
HOTEL & TOURISM
ASSOCIATION



1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 REPORT OBJECTIVES

Under the overall project “to identify and understand regulatory obstacles and enabling conditions for coral reef restoration implementation with tourism sector participation to support future policy changes to increase coral reef restoration in the Caribbean”, this report looks specifically at the situation in the Dominican Republic.



This report, therefore:

- (i) identifies the national policy, regulatory and operational framework (policy framework) in the Dominican Republic that guides and influences the implementation of coral reef restoration by the tourism industry; and
- (ii) identifies obstacles, gaps, opportunities, best practices and lessons learnt for the involvement of The Dominican Republic tourism industry in coral reef restoration.



1.2 IMPORTANCE OF & THREAT TO CORAL REEFS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Dominican Republic, which occupies the eastern two-thirds of Hispaniola in the Greater Antilles chain in the Caribbean Sea (**Figure 1**), has a land mass of 18,712 sq miles (48,320 sq km) and an added water area of 135 sq miles (350 sq.km) with an estimate of just under 1,000 miles (1609 sq km) of coastline.

Figure 1:
Location of the
Dominican
Republic



This coastline is a bastion of ecological richness vital to the country’s economic prosperity through tourism and fisheries, and accounts for a staggering US\$1.14 billion each year in ecosystem services². This coastline includes a coastal and marine system ranging from sandy beaches, rocky estuaries, mangroves, marine prairies and coral reefs.

Coral reefs are a centrally important part of the coastal zone of the Dominican Republic. These reefs are located in all of the seven (7) coastal and marine zones identified³ in The Dominican Republic (**Figure 2**), i.e. in:

² IDB Loan DR-L1154 “Sustainable Coastal Management Project

³ Coastal Zone Management and Tourism in the Dominican Republic. Giovanni Ruta ([World Bank Document](#) 67330)

Figure 2: Dominican Republic Coastal Zones



- (i) **The North-West (Montecristi)** – characterized by coral reefs and estuaries and one of the most important ecological areas and where the natural state is conserved.
- (ii) **The North (Puerto Plata, Sosua, Cabaret)** – characterized by rocky coasts, sandy beaches, mangrove ecosystems, wetlands and coral reefs.
- (iii) **The North-East (Samaná Peninsula)** – characterized by sandy beaches, rocky coasts and coral reefs.
- (iv) **The East (Bávaro – Punta Cana)** – dominated by coral reefs and predominantly characterized by white sand.
- (v) **The South-East (La Romani- Bayahibe)** - characterized by sandy beaches and cliffs. Coral reefs are also present.
- (vi) **The Capital District (Boca Chica, Juan Dolio, Guayacanes & Santo Domingo)** – characterized by artificial beaches. White sandy beaches



originated from a small coral reef formation in this coastal zone.

- (vii) **The South** – Characterized by rocky coasts, small beaches, white sandy beaches and some coral reef.

Not only are coral reefs located in some level in all of the coastal zones in the country, coastal municipalities accommodate **50% of the total population** and attract the majority of the **5.3 million annual foreign tourists** in a tourism industry that has been growing faster than the rest of the economy. Between 1995 and 2000, for example, the World Bank (WB)⁴ indicates that tourism's GDP grew 12% every year compared to 8% for the rest of the economy. In 2023, when stayover tourist and cruise passengers are combined (all visitors), the Dominican Republic recorded receiving the most visitors in the country's history, i.e. 10,306,517.



According to data from the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB)⁵, the tourism sector represents 15.9% of the total GDP, with 800,000 jobs and 37.7% of total exports in 2019.

While supporting coastal livelihood, fisheries and the growing tourism industry, however, the country's precious coastal ecosystems face relentless threats from human-induced factors

⁴ [World Bank Document](#)

⁵ Banco Central de la República Dominicana (BCRD). <https://www.bancentral.gov.do/>

like overfishing, which tilts the ecological balance and promotes the growth of coral-damaging algae.



These critical habitats are also besieged by a barrage of adversities including:

- overharvesting of fish populations;
- pollution (*in the North, pollution of the Yaque del Norte river carries sediments and pollutants from the agricultural areas upstream*);
- coral bleaching;
- rising sea temperatures;
- sargassum, which is smothering coral reefs, depleting oxygen, and disrupting biodiversity;
- the spread of the invasive *Unomia Stolonifera*; and
- unchecked coastal construction,

Along with:

- harmful runoff from urban and agricultural areas, and
- the broader impacts of climate change.

Together, these factors are causing profound and troubling deterioration of the coral ecosystems in the Dominican Republic.

Concurrently, the tourism sector, intrinsically tied to the health of these marine and coastal ecosystems, is on the brink of potential economic downturns,

facing a projected loss of up to US\$100 million in hotel revenues over a decade due to erosion and biodiversity loss⁶.

Therefore, conserving coastal and marine resources has become imperative, not just for the environment's sake but also to maintain the Dominican Republic's economic dynamism and competitive stance in the global tourism market.

The nation now stands at a crossroads, striving to find a sustainable balance between progress and ecological guardianship, with the urgent task of preserving its coastal ecosystems taking precedence. More projects have, therefore, also focused on restoration of the country's coral reef ecosystem.

1.3 ADDRESSING THREATS: SPREADING CORAL REEF RESTORATION

In the Dominican Republic, coral reef restoration initiatives are spearheaded by a collaboration of private organizations such as Fundación Grupo Puntacana (FGPC) and scientific NGOs like Fundación Dominicana de Estudios Marinos (FUNDEMAR), alongside support from international conservation agencies like The Nature Conservancy, Agencia de Cooperación Alemana (GIZ) and Counterpart International.



Their joint efforts, showcased in projects like **Coral Mania 2019** and **CoralCarib**, have been pivotal in rejuvenating coral reefs in Punta Cana-Bavaro (1722



⁶ IDB Loan DR-L1154 "Sustainable Coastal Management Project

acropora fragments were out-planted across sites in Bávaro) and Bayahibe, and have played a crucial role in establishing the Dominican Consortium of Coastal Restoration (CDRC).

In fact, Fundación Grupo Puntacana and Fundación Dominicana de Estudios Marinos have been



leading the charge in coral reef restoration in the Dominican Republic for over 15 years and played a central role in the formation of the Dominican Reef Network (RAD) with the backing of The Nature Conservancy and CDRC, which is an informal organization that operates as a specific Committee of RAD. These organizations have been instrumental in leading coral reef restoration initiatives, collaborating with other entities to optimize and scale-up restoration efforts, promote coral reef conservation stewardship, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities.

The establishment of the CDRC was actually prompted by a need for **regulated practices in response to an unregulated surge in coral reef restoration activities in 2015**, ensuring that restoration activities are conducted in a structured and responsible manner.

The consortium's mission is for:

“The conservation and restoration of coral reef structures and associated species, with the active involvement of communities”.

To bolster these efforts, advanced technological applications and best practices are being employed, such as remote sensing technologies for optimal

site identification and reproductive methods for the resurgence of threatened coral species.

In addition, the Dominican Reef Network (RAD) serves as a pivotal platform for coordinating conservation and restoration efforts in the country, engaging diverse stakeholders in the sustainable management of coral reef ecosystems.

The ongoing commitment to enhance management tactics, forge strategic partnerships, and seek inventive financial mechanisms demonstrates the Dominican Republic's robust effort to protect and revitalize its marine ecosystems.

This comprehensive approach aims to safeguard the nation's coral reefs, ensuring their recovery and sustainability for future generations.

Notwithstanding, the efforts of the key stakeholders, the Dominican Republic, along with many other Caribbean nations, has experienced a significant decline in coral coverage, **with losses ranging from 40 to 60% over a period of less than two years**. This decline can be attributed to the Stony Coral Tissue Loss disease and the unprecedented 2023 bleaching event, which was the most severe in the Caribbean.

This situation underscores the impact of climate change on marine ecosystems and emphasizes the inadequacy of isolated restoration efforts and the need for greater, wider and sustained input into coral reef restoration.



1.4 TOURISM AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CORAL REEF RESTORATION



Under the theme “Dominican Republic Has It All”, the Ministry of Tourism encourages visitors to explore the country’s lush tropical island paradise with its nearly 1,000 miles (1,609 km) of coastlines, 250 miles (402) of the world’s top beaches, a variety of sports, recreation and entertainment options and a magnificent array of luxurious and diverse accommodation.

Figure 3: Areas Promoted for Visitors to Explore, Dominican Republic



The country’s gastronomy along with the eco adventures available in the country’s

national parks, mountain ranges, rivers and beaches are also promoted (Figure 3).

Aware that the tourism product it promotes has to remain pristine, the country has embraced sustainable tourism and embarked on a “Roadmap for Low Carbon and Resource Efficient Accommodation” to set the country sector on a path to sustainability.

The accommodation sector plays a key role in the tourism industry in the Dominican Republic with ownership in the tourism industry centered around the accommodation comprising small hotels (less than 50 rooms) that belong to a physical person and larger hotels (more than 100 rooms) that belong to corporations or hotel chains.

The tourism industry, currently undergirded by its accommodation sector, therefore, presents a significant opportunity for coral reef restoration in the Dominican Republic. This opportunity is more pronounced given the already active involvement of various organizations and hotel chains in the country’s diverse accommodation sector that are engaged in sustainability activities and conservation efforts. These activities can be built upon or expanded and can also encourage the wider involvement of additional businesses in other areas and sub-sectors within the tourism industry.

1.4.1 Tourism Industry Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Major international hotel chains in the private sector in the Dominican Republic are actively engaging in sustainability initiatives as a core component of their **global corporate social and environmental responsibility policies** and **ESG best practices and indicators**. These

commitments are realized both through in-house sustainable actions and through supporting local NGOs that lead conservation efforts, such as coral reef restoration.

Key industry players contributing to these initiatives include:

- Grupo Puntacana;
- Grupo Cap Cana;
- Grupo Iberostar;
- Riu Hotels & Resorts;
- Catalonia Hotels & Resorts; and
- Grupo Piñero.

Their sustainability endeavors cover a broad range of activities, including adopting circular economy strategies, improving water and waste management, pursuing decarbonization, transitioning to renewable energy sources, engaging in marine conservation, accessing responsible food sources (blue foods), and implementing nature-based solutions.

In addition to these operational practices, these hotel groups also provide financial support to NGOs, thereby reinforcing efforts to safeguard their natural capital, including the marine ecosystems critical to their operations and the environment.

For instance, Iberostar, through its “Wave of Change Program”, has implemented a national mangrove restoration program at its Bávaro complex and established a coral laboratory to study the adaptability of corals to climate change.



This proactive approach aligns with the responsible tourism movement and contributes to the protection and preservation of coral reefs, mangroves, and other marine ecosystems.

The participation of these international hotel chains in conservation activities not only enhances the ecological health of the **coastal areas but also contributes to the sustainable development of the tourism industry in the Dominican Republic.**

Moreover, the involvement of Fundación Grupo Puntacana further emphasizes the significance of coral reef restoration as a conservation strategy to increase the value of natural capital.

The restoration of coral reefs and the establishment of **protected areas by Fundación Grupo Puntacana and other organizations are crucial steps in securing the coastal landscape and the livelihood of the local communities.** These initiatives not only contribute to the resilience of nature in the face of climate change and tourism but also provide opportunities for sustainable tourism development and community livelihoods.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 DEFINITIONS & CONCEPTS CLARIFICATION

(i) The Policy Framework

The “Policy Framework” is broadly defined as including National Policies, Legislation, Regulations, Operational Requirements and related documented Policy Statements of the Government of the Dominican Republic that impact upon or guide coral reef restoration. The “Policy Framework” also includes the agencies and institutional arrangements in place that administer the policies.

(ii) Tourism Sector Participation

This is defined as the direct involvement of the tourism industry (i.e., businesses that cater to international and domestic visitors) in coral reef restoration as an economic and/or philanthropic activity to increase the conservation and sustainability of the marine environment, the diversification and offer of tourism experiences, the benefits derived to communities, and the added value provided for visitors, employees and their tourism business alike.

2.2 DATA COLLECTION APPROACH

(i) Stakeholder Surveys & Structured Interviews:

In the implementation of the “Caribbean Coral Reef Restoration & Tourism Policy Analysis Project” under which the work done in the Dominican Republic falls, two data collection survey instruments were developed:



- one to gather data from private sector and NGO stakeholders, and
- the other to gather data from public sector stakeholder.

Guidelines for structured interviews with the various stakeholders were also established for utilization accordingly.

These instruments were followed and/or adapted as necessary for the situation faced in the Dominican Republic.



(ii) The Approach in the Dominican Republic

In the Dominican Republic, data was collected from stakeholders representing:

- the private sector;
- the public sector;
- international conservation organizations, and
- international cooperation agencies.

INTERVIEWS

Adapted from the project’s survey instruments and interview guidelines, structured **one-on-one discussions** were coordinated, scheduled and conducting to gather insights on various areas related to tourism, coral reef restoration, and marine space management.

SURVEY

While interviews were the key method of primary data collection in the Dominican Republic, the **online survey** was also sent to selected tourism industry businesses involved in coral reef restoration activities.

A total of five (5) representatives from the Dominican Republic participated by the online survey. While this may appear insignificant, the survey got input from the leading independent scuba diving operators that were not able to participate via interview. They added a point of view that would otherwise not be obtained, and which was still considered.

Private Sector Approach

For the private sector, the approach focused on gathering information on general business operations, best practices, legal requirements, and identifying improvement opportunities.

Public Sector/NGO Approach

Similarly, for public sector agencies and NGOs, the discussions and surveys covered general agency information, impact on tourism and coral reef restoration, permitting and licensing procedures, as well as identifying gaps, opportunities, and next steps in coral reef restoration space in the Dominican Republic.

The approach emphasized structured discussion guidelines, must-ask questions, and the importance of providing participants with information on the purpose of the analysis.

(iii) *Desk Research*

To supplement the primary research collected from interviews and discussion, desk research was also undertaken. Several documents were pertinent to informing and guiding the knowledge base for analysis including the document on Coastal Zone Management and Tourism in the Dominican Republic (Giovanni Ruta), studies done by the IDB, information issued by the Ministry

of Tourism, and relevant laws of the country.

2.3 ANALYSIS & ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

(i) *National and Public Sector Context*

This area of the analysis focuses on understanding the broader national and public sector context in which coral reef restoration and tourism initiatives are implemented. It involves examining the country's geographic, socio-economic, and environmental factors that influence the policy landscape.

Additionally, the analysis considers the mandates, roles, and priorities of key public agencies involved in marine resource management. Understanding the national and public sector context provides a foundation for assessing the effectiveness of existing policies and identifying areas for improvement.

(ii) *Policy and Regulatory Framework*

This aspect of the analysis involves mapping and evaluating the existing policies, plans, and regulations related to coral reefs, tourism, and marine spatial planning, which impacts coral reef restoration and the involvement of the tourism industry in the Dominican Republic. It aims to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the policy framework.

By analyzing the governance structure and responsibilities across agencies, this assessment determined the effectiveness of coordination and collaboration among different stakeholders.

Overall, this analysis provides insights into the regulatory environment and helps identify opportunities for policy integration and coherence related to the involvement of the tourism industry in coral reef restoration in the Dominican Republic.

(iii) **Permitting and Operational Requirements**

This area focuses on evaluating the permitting processes and operational requirements for coral reef restoration and tourism activities. It involves assessing the complexity, efficiency, and transparency of the permitting procedures.

By understanding the application requirements and associated timelines and costs, the analysis can identify potential barriers or bottlenecks in the process.

The assessment aims to provide recommendations for streamlining and improving the permitting system, ensuring that it supports sustainable coral reef restoration and tourism practices.

(iv) **Private Sector Engagement and Best Practices**

This aspect of the analysis examines the role and initiatives of the private sector stakeholders in the tourism and coral reef restoration sectors.

It involves identifying best practices and successful models of private sector engagement in coral reef restoration and sustainable tourism. By understanding the private sector's involvement and contributions, the analysis can highlight opportunities for increased collaboration and partnership between the public and private sectors.

This can lead to the development of policies and strategies that leverage the resources, expertise, and innovation of the private sector for the benefit of coral reef restoration and sustainable tourism in the Dominican Republic.

2.4 **CONTRIBUTING STAKEHOLDERS**

This analysis report received the input of the following critical stakeholders in the Dominican Republic:

(i) **Fundación Grupo Puntacana (FGPC)**

FGPC has been a pioneer involved in coral reef restoration efforts, collaborating with local NGOs like FUNDEMAR and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to lead coral reef restoration programs.



Their initiatives focus on enhancing ecosystem services, promoting conservation stewardship, and providing sustainable livelihood opportunities. Additionally, FGPC has played a significant role in promoting sustainable tourism practices and marine conservation in the region.

(ii) **FUNDEMAR**

The Fundación Dominicana de Estudios Marinos (FUNDEMAR), i.e., the Dominican Foundation for Marine Studies, has been at the forefront jointly with FGPC and



TNC in coral conservation efforts in the Dominican Republic. They have been actively involved in protecting and conserving marine life, including endangered species, and have been instrumental in coral reef restoration around the shores of the Dominican Republic.

FUNDEMAR also provided monitoring protocols, national and international training, and data collection to support the assessment and conservation mainly of coral reef ecosystems, but also mangroves, beaches and

seagrass. In addition, FUNDEMAR has been involved in spreading awareness about sustainable marine resource usage and ecosystems.

(iii) **Red Arrecifal Dominicana**

Red Arrecifal Dominicana (Dominican Reef Network) is an inter-institutional alliance formed by organizations and individuals involved in the conservation and management of coral reefs and associated species at national and local levels. The alliance, established in 2016, promotes participation and communication between the Government, the private sector, academia and local communities, to define action aimed at the sustainable management of coral reefs. It includes founding members such as:

- The Nature Conservancy (TNC);
- Reef Check República Dominicana;
- Fundación Grupo Puntacana, and
- FUNDEMAR.



Their collaborative efforts have focused on defining solutions to improve the health and resilience of coral reef ecosystems.

(iv) **The Nature Conservancy Dominican Republic** TNC has been actively involved in coral reef restoration efforts in collaboration with local NGOs and

stakeholders. They have been instrumental in promoting sustainable fishing practices, establishing protected marine areas, and preserving coral reefs and mangroves in the Dominican Republic. TNC's work has focused on promoting sustainable marine resource usage and conservation practices in the region.



(v) **Vice Ministry of Coastal and Marine Resources⁷**

The Vice Ministry, which is part of the Ministry of Environment, has played a crucial role in the governance and regulation of coastal and marine resources in the Dominican Republic. Their contributions include overseeing policy frameworks, regulatory oversight, and coordination of initiatives related to marine resource management, including coral reef restoration and sustainable tourism practices.



(vi) **Iberostar Group**



The Iberostar Group has been involved in supporting coral reef restoration and marine conservation efforts in the Dominican Republic. Their contributions may include financial support, sustainable tourism practices, and collaboration with local stakeholders to promote marine conservation and coral reef restoration.

⁷ Despite every effort to reach out to the Ministry of Tourism we were unable to coordinate any potential meetings. We could, therefore, not gather further insights and perspectives directly.

(vii) Reef Check

Reef Check is a global organization dedicated to protecting tropical coral reefs



and California rocky reefs. They have been actively involved in coral reef monitoring, restoration, and citizen science initiatives including the Dominican Republic.

Reef Check's contributions include providing training, monitoring protocols, and data collection to support the assessment and conservation of coral reef ecosystems.

(viii) Galleon Divers

Galleon Divers, located near Monte Cristi in the North-West, is a full-service scuba dive operation that has been in operation since 2004. Galleon divers offer dives to local wrecks and tours of the local mangrove forests and nearby coral reefs and have partnered with Coco Mar restaurant and the Marbella Hotel to provide food and accommodation options to clients. Galleon Divers is passionate about scuba diving and marine ecology and have partners with the National Department of Marine Archaeology and other agencies such as:



- Reef Check
- National Maritime Authority of the Dominican Republic (ANAMAR)
- AgroFrontera (Environmental Conservation Society), and
- other organizations involved in protecting the environment.

In addition to diving the local wrecks, they offer tours of the local mangrove forests and nearby coral reefs.

(ix) Tropical Sea Divers

Tropical Sea Divers is a PADI dive center located near Santo Domingo in the Capital District. It is a diving school for small groups and individual divers that caters for beginners to the more experienced divers. In addition to PADI courses, Tropical Sea Divers provide dive programs of the International Association of Nitrox and Technical Divers (IANTD), with whom they are also affiliated.



Tropical Sea Divers also offer day and night time diving and excursions including technical



dives, cave and day trips to Catalina Island. In addition, they offer special dives such as underwater scooter diving and special request dives such as "Baptisms Diving".

(x) Sea Pro Divers

Sea Pro Divers has two locations – one in the Punta Cana area in the East and the other in Puerto Plata in the North. Both locations fall under the overall Sea Pro Water Sports company that offers water recreation excursions and activities to clients.



These activities include reef snorkel, sandbar excursions to swim and relax, and viewing marine life in their natural habitat, e.g. turtle, dolphins, stingrays.

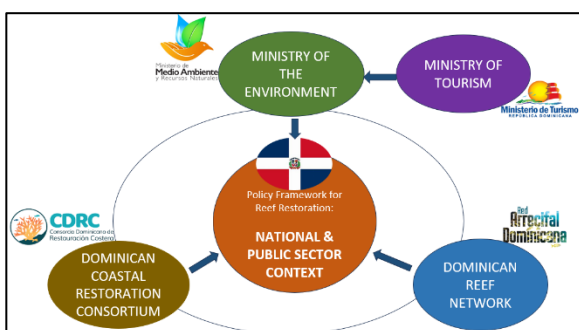
3. POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR CORAL REEF RESTORATION

3.1 NATIONAL & PUBLIC SECTOR CONTEXT

Policy-wise, the Dominican Republic is actively refining its approach to coral reef management and protection. This is evidenced by efforts to improve policy frameworks, broaden scientific understanding, and confront the multifaceted challenges faced by coral ecosystems head-on. The economic valuation of coral reefs is gaining traction as a pivotal tool in rallying support and investment for their preservation and restoration.

At the national level and public sector level, three agencies stand out when it comes influencing and implementing coral reef restoration policy and conservation activities (Figure 4), i.e.:

Figure 4: National Context- Coral Reef Restoration, Dominican Republic



- (i) The Ministry of Environment and Marine Resources, which holds primary responsibility for overseeing the health of marine ecosystems in the Dom Rep, and benefits from the support of the Fisheries Council under the Ministry of Agriculture as well as from the Navy. Collaboratively their

efforts are essential in the concerted endeavor to maintain and enhance the nation's marine environments;

- (ii) The Dominican Coastal Restoration Consortium (CDRC), and
- (iii) The Dominican Reef Network (RAD).

The CDRC and RAD⁸; and are integral to national conservation endeavors, operating in **close alliance with** the Ministry of Environment.

This Ministry of Environment has been:

- instrumental in simplifying and accelerating the permit acquisition process for coral reef restoration research and,
- in conjunction with the CDRC, provides rigorous technical oversight for the monitoring and assessment of these initiatives.

The CDRC's responsibilities include:

- optimizing the organization and flow of information across multiple restoration projects, and
- bolstering the cooperative dynamics among all parties involved.

Within this cooperative framework, a **standout initiative, with TNC being the lead executing partners, is the CoralCarib project**, which received financial backing from the German Federal Government International Initiative for Climate Protection (IKI). This initiative serves as a clear indication of the commitment to fostering the resilience and restoration of coral reefs, particularly in light of the increasing impacts of climate change.

⁸ CDRC operates as a collaborative working group, whereas the RAD is recognized as an NGO. Both work in partnership with the Ministry of

Environment to promote and implement best practices within their initiatives.

Additionally, it must be noted that the **Ministry of Tourism (MITUR)** in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, plays a critical role in **supporting coral reef restoration and the conservation of marine ecosystems.**

MITUR's involvement is particularly significant in integrating the economic importance of tourism with the environmental imperatives of conservation. This integration is crucial as the coastal zones are not only key tourist attractions but also vital habitats that require restoration and preservation to sustain the country's natural heritage and tourism industry.

This collaborative effort has been significantly bolstered by the **Sustainable Coastal Management Project**, which has secured in 2023 substantial support in the form of a US 70-million-dollar funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), marking one of the most significant financial accomplishments related to coral reef restoration to date.

Sustainable Coastal Management Project (IADB-DR-L1154)

The project's primary aim is:

- to implement measures to improve the resilience and sustainability of priority areas, which includes enhancing the sustainability of tourist coastal zones, factoring in climate risks, and
- to strengthen the legal and institutional framework and capacity necessary for effective integrated coastal zone management.

Through this initiative, MITUR and the Ministry of Environment are working together to implement a series of investments and interventions.

The investments and interventions include:

- the development of mixed green-gray infrastructure;
- restoration of coral reefs, mangroves, and dunes, as well as
- promoting sustainable tourism practices that align with environmental conservation.

The project also emphasizes the importance of building **local capacity and supporting alternative livelihoods** that contribute to the sustainable management of coastal and marine resources, ensuring that the natural beauty and biodiversity of the Dominican Republic's coastal areas are maintained for future generations.

MITUR's role is oriented to integrate the economic and touristic value of the coastal zones with sustainable practices, ensuring that tourism continues to thrive without compromising the health of marine ecosystems.

The Ministry of Environment complements this by focusing on the ecological integrity of these areas, **implementing measures such as coral reef restoration**, protection of mangroves, and other nature-based solutions.

The Sustainable Coastal Management Project also takes into account the role of **corals as both a draw for tourists and a catalyst for tourism-related activities**, as well as examining the **potential opportunities and risks that tourism poses to their conservation.**

3.2 POLICY FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

The policy framework for coral reef restoration in the Dominican Republic is primarily guided by two significant pieces of legislation, i.e.:

- (i) Law 64-00 on Environment and Natural Resources. and

- (ii) Law 202-14 on Protected Areas.

Other legislations complement these including:

- (iii) the Fisheries Law 307-04, and

- (iv) the Navy's Law 309-10.

These laws establish the legal basis for environmental protection and the sustainable use of natural resources, including coral reefs, which are critical to the country's biodiversity and tourism industry.

- (1) Law 64-00 on Environment

and Natural Resources sets the overarching environmental

governance structure,

including the management of coastal and marine resources. It provides for the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components.

Under this law, coral reefs are recognized for their ecological importance and the services they provide, such as coastal protection and support for the fishing industry.

- (2) Law 202-14 on Protected Areas complements Law 64-00 by establishing a legal framework for the creation and management of protected areas, which can



include important coral reef habitats. This law aims to conserve biological diversity, protect endangered species, and maintain natural processes in a way that is compatible with the sustainable development of adjacent areas.

- (3) Additionally, Law 307-04 is the legal instrument that establishes the framework for the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture. This law includes provisions for the conservation of marine ecosystems, which would encompass coral reefs. It aims to ensure that fishing practices do not degrade these ecosystems, which are vital not only for biodiversity but also for the economic well-being of coastal communities that depend on them.

- (4) Furthermore, Law 309-10 establishes the Dominican Navy's role within the country's legislative framework, endowing it with the authority to ensure maritime law enforcement and the protection of national waters, including responsibilities pivotal to the conservation of coral ecosystems.

The Navy's duties under this law encompass:

- routine patrols to maintain the Dominican Republic's maritime integrity and prevent activities detrimental to coral reefs, such as illegal fishing and anchoring;
- enforcement of environmental laws within Marine Protected Areas and other crucial habitats for coral;
- supporting civilian law enforcement in conservation efforts, and
- leading search and rescue missions to avert incidental damage to coral by distressed vessels.

Moreover, the Navy stands as a frontline responder to marine environmental crises, such as oil spills, which pose a significant threat to coral health.

3.3 KEY REGULATORY AGENCIES

The Ministry of Environment in the Dominican Republic holds the **sole responsibility for coral reef restoration within the current legal framework**, as outlined in Law 64-00 and Law 202-14. These laws establish the Ministry of Environment as the primary regulatory authority for environmental conservation and restoration efforts, including coral reefs. The Ministry of Environment oversees the evaluation, authorization, and technical support for coral reef restoration projects, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations and sustainable practices.

Additionally, while the Ministry of Environment takes the lead in coral reef restoration, it receives support from:

- the Navy, and
 - the Dominican Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture led by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- (i) **The Dominican Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture** provides expertise and collaboration in:
- the assessment of the ecological impact of coral reef restoration on fisheries,
 - ensuring that sustainable fishing practices aligns with restoration efforts and the preservation of marine biodiversity.
- (ii) **The Navy** plays a role in:
- providing logistical support, and

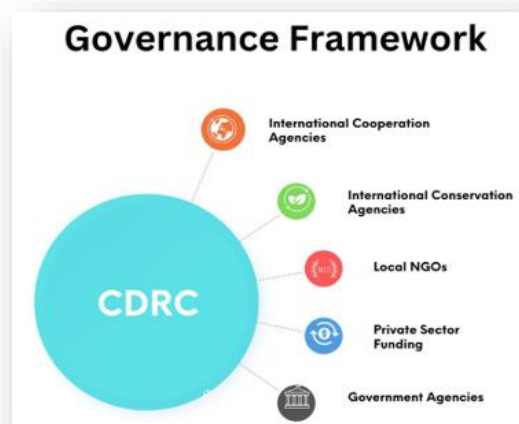
- enforcement of marine conservation regulations to protect coral reef ecosystems.

This collaborative approach between the Ministry of Environment, the Fisheries Department, and the Navy reflects a comprehensive effort to ensure the effective oversight and promotion of coral reef restoration within the Dominican Republic's legal framework, safeguarding the ecological integrity of coral reefs and supporting sustainable marine resource management.

3.4 FRAMEWORK GOVERNANCE

The institutional arrangements between the Ministry of Environment and the Dominican Coastal Restoration Consortium (CDRC) reflect a collaborative effort to conserve and restore coral reef ecosystems within the Dominican Republic. The CDRC, with legal authorization and technical support from the Ministry, spearheads the evaluation of coral nurseries across the nation (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Dominican Republic Governance Framework for Coral Reef Restoration



This partnership involves a multi-stakeholder approach, where the CDRC leads in the **practical application of restoration techniques**, with communities actively participating in the process.

The Ministry provides the necessary [legal framework](#) and support, ensuring that the activities align with national environmental policies and sustainability goals.

Together, they work towards:

- enhancing environmental and social resilience against climate change and other degrading factors, and
- employing an annual operating plan that includes recommendations for strengthening each nursery and continuing conservation efforts.

This arrangement is part of a broader initiative that involves financial mechanisms supported by the private sector and international cooperation to invest in the conservation of coral reefs vital to the Dominican Republic's ecosystem services and tourism industry.

On the other hand, the [Tourism Law](#) primarily addresses the [economic and promotional aspects of tourism](#). It does not directly focus on coral conservation, which is managed by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources as an environmental issue. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources is responsible for

preserving marine ecosystems, including coral reefs, through environmental legislation and sustainable development strategies.

[Although tourism impacts coral reefs significantly, the Ministry's mandate is to ensure that tourism practices do not harm these ecosystems.](#)

While the Tourism Law does **not explicitly link to coral conservation**, the economic value of healthy coral reefs to tourism creates an implicit connection.

A collaborative approach involving both the Ministry of Tourism and the tourism industry is crucial to promote responsible tourism that supports coral conservation, leveraging the sector's economic benefits to foster environmental protection and sustainability.

This governance framework is one in which there [is collaboration among various stakeholders](#), including CDRC and RAD members, local communities, NGOs, the tourism sector, government agencies and international partners. This collaborative approach is essential for the success of coral reef restoration projects, as [it allows for the sharing of knowledge, resources, and best practices](#).

4. REGULATIONS & OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

4.1 PERMITTING

To facilitate coral reef restoration efforts, operational requirements necessitate that individuals or organizations seeking to conduct research or restoration activities must secure permits from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. The permitting process involves the submission of a comprehensive project proposal that details the project's goals, methods, expected results, and potential environmental impacts. The proposal must align with sustainability and conservation principles, demonstrating a commitment to the preservation of marine ecosystems.

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources is responsible for evaluating the proposal that is submitted through a single window, which may involve consultations with other stakeholders, including CDRC, local communities, NGOs, and experts in the field.

If the project is deemed to align with the country's environmental policies and conservation goals, a permit is granted for up to 1 year. Permits may be issued for a longer period depending on the justification of the project, which may include specific conditions to ensure minimal impact on the environment and adherence to best practices.

Approval hinges on the project's adherence to these principles and its potential contribution to the health and resilience of coral populations.

4.2 APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

The permitting process may require an environmental impact assessment (EIA) to evaluate the potential effects of the restoration project on the local environment and communities. If the EIA is favorable, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources will issue a permit that outlines the conditions and requirements that must be adhered to during the project.

Cost: Fees for the permitting process and coral reef restoration activities can vary (7-20%) depending on the scale and scope of the project. These fees are typically used to cover the administrative costs of reviewing the proposal, monitoring the project, and ensuring compliance with environmental regulations.

Timelines: The timeline for obtaining a permit can also vary. It often depends on the complexity of the project and the efficiency of the administrative processes within the Ministry. It is advisable for organizations to plan for several months from the submission of the proposal to the issuance of a permit, although this can be shorter or longer based on specific circumstances. In general, the process of obtaining permits is agile and it can take between 2 to 3 weeks.

Obligations of the Permit Holder: Once a permit is granted, the organization is responsible for adhering to the conditions set forth by the Ministry of Environment, which may include regular reporting and monitoring to assess the impact and success of the restoration efforts.

The Ministry of Environment may also require that restoration activities be carried out in a manner that supports the natural recovery processes of the coral reefs and involves the local community in the efforts.

It's important for organizations to engage with the Ministry of Environment early in the planning process to understand all the

requirements and to ensure that their restoration activities are carried out legally and sustainably.

Collaboration with local stakeholders, including communities and other conservation organizations in particular with CDRC and RAD, is also **crucial** for the success and long-term sustainability of coral reef restoration projects.



CARIBBEAN
HOTEL & TOURISM
ASSOCIATION



5. ASSESSMENT AND GAP ANALYSIS

5.1 ASSESSMENT OF POLICY FRAMEWORK

Coral reef restoration efforts are **driven predominantly by a network of dedicated conservancy NGOs**, each playing a pivotal role in the collective mission to preserve and rejuvenate the nation's coral reefs.

While these non-governmental organizations take the lead with hands-on projects and innovative practices for reef conservation, they operate within a larger ecosystem of contributors.

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources governs this landscape by establishing policies and regulations. Research institutions and academia supplement these efforts with data and scientific methodologies, while international partnerships expand the scope with additional expertise and support.

The private sector, including businesses and local communities, also pitches in, providing essential funding and volunteer efforts.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships, like the Dominican Coastal Restoration Consortium, synergize these efforts to facilitate information sharing and resource allocation. Together, these agencies tackle environmental challenges—such as climate change and overfishing—to safeguard the health of coral reefs, which are crucial for the country's biodiversity and tourism-driven economy. Their aim is to protect these fragile ecosystems through a combined approach that includes fieldwork, research, community involvement, policy advocacy, and educational outreach.

5.2 FEEDBACK FROM TOURISM BUSINESSES

The coral reef restoration landscape in the Dominican Republic has garnered significant attention and involvement from tourism businesses and global hotel groups. Their

input reflects a commitment to sustainable practices and conservation and include:

(i) **Importance of Coral Reef Restoration**

Tourism businesses and global hotel groups recognize the critical importance of coral reef restoration in the Dominican Republic. All online surveyed participants, for example, when specifically asked to **rank the importance of coral reef to the economy**, gave the **highest ranked level of importance**, i.e. 6 out of 6.

(ii) **Benefits of Coral Reef Restoration**

Survey respondents felt that the following are the **top three main benefits** for the tourism industry in the Dominican Republic becoming involved in Coral Reef Restoration initiatives:

- Protecting coastal areas from storm surge and addressing other climate change impact with healthy reef barriers (*Highest Ranking*);
- Economic benefits for the country and industry (*tied with the above for Highest Ranking*); and
- Environmental/conservation advantages for the country/industry (*Second Highest Ranking*).

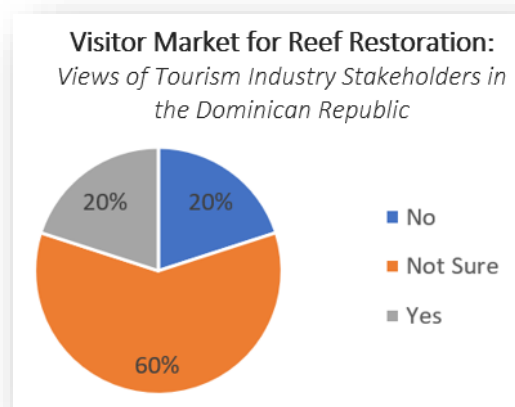
Marketing and Promotional edge for the tourism sector, Education and Stewardship benefits and other benefits as could be indicated by participants, were not ranked as being high on the benefits to be derived by the involvement of the tourism industry in coral reef restoration.

The results support that the benefits of coral reef restoration to the tourism industry in the Dom Rep is linked more to their **support for resource protection and their practice of corporate social responsibility** and **less from a business economic or financial benefit approach**.

This is **further supported in the survey results** when tourism industry stakeholders that currently participated in coral reef restoration activities were asked and responded accordingly to the following:

- (a) **Market for Coral Reef Restoration:** Do you think that there is a strong visitor market for coral reef restoration activities and experiences in the Dominican Republic?

Figure 6: Visitor Market for Coral Reef Restoration-Industry View



As noted in **Figure 6⁹**, industry representatives in the Dominican Republic generally were not sure and do not think that there is a market for coral reef restoration (80%). **Yet, they still engage in coral reef restoration activities.** Only a minor amount, i.e. 20%, felt that there is a market.

⁹ The percentages reflect the averages of responses (i.e. all 5 respondents replied with 6 = 100%, all respondents replied with 0 = 0%)

(b) **Coral Reef Restoration as a Priority:** Rank the priority placed on coral reef restoration by **your business**.

- **87%** had an average high priority rating, i.e. 5.2 out of 6, for coral reef restoration.

(c) **Coral Reef Restoration & Business Plans:** Rank the priority given to coral reef restoration in your **business plan**.

- **67%** of the surveyed respondents, made allowances for coral reef restoration in their Business Plan (4-point average ranking score). This is less than the high ranking placed on coral reef restoration by their business.

This may support that, while coral reef **restoration is important**, it is not necessarily viewed as need for **inclusion in business plans** by the participating respondents. This may further indicate that the responding businesses **do not engage in the sale of coral reef restoration experiences** and/or are **not positioned to undertake such activities** – collaboratively or individually. Consistent with the views of interviewees. It may also support that the business aspect of coral reef restoration is **not as important as the conservation element itself**.

(iii) **Climate Change & Resilience**

Tourism industry stakeholders acknowledge the impact of global warming and the need to protect and restore the country's unique marine ecosystems, including coral reefs (*Both online and interviewed participants gave this high level of importance*).

The restoration efforts in the country are seen as essential for making nature more resilient in the face of climate change,

tourism, and other man-made dangers (*This aligns with the goal of enhancing ecosystem services for the future and providing alternative, sustainable livelihood opportunities*).

(iv) **Industry Awareness of/Introduction to Coral Reef Restoration**

For the tourism industry in the Dominican Republic, **NGOs and industry organizations play a key role in sensitizing and building the awareness** of tourism enterprises to coral reef restoration.

The majority of surveyed participants, i.e., **80%**, indicated that the main source of initial awareness to the term "Reef Restoration" was an **NGO/Agency** engaged in environment protection, marine research and related activities. The remaining 20% indicated that **initial awareness was a guest/client**.

While the number of surveyed participants is few, and a sweeping generalization cannot be made for all tourism businesses in the Dom Rep, this response still allows insights into this the area. For these businesses in the Dom Rep, therefore, this result demonstrates the **important role of NGOs and agencies** in, not only coral reef restoration, but in potentially building awareness and engaging the tourism sector in coral reef restoration.

Although only 20% of the survey respondents were introduced to coral reef restoration by their client, it still shows that the market (visitors/clients) and market trends have an influencing factor on coral reef restoration. **Attention to market trends** should, therefore, not be overlooked or underestimated if the industry is to remain internationally competitive.

Most illuminating, however, is the fact that **government/public sector agencies did not play a role** in exposing any of the private sector participants to coral reef restoration.

(v) **National Policy & Tourism Industry Participation**

Participants in the online survey summed up their views on whether the current national policy in the country supports the **ease of entry and operation of local tourism businesses in coral reef restoration** with the following comments:

"It is neither encouraged nor restricted"

"Current policy does not actively support industry involvement in coral reef restoration"

This view emphasizes that, while there is no specific policy restriction against the participation of the tourism industry in coral reef restoration, it is not an approach that is specifically encouraged.

(vi) **Opportunities for Enhanced Public Sector Engagement**

Based on feedback, there is a view among some tourism industry participants that a higher level of importance is placed on coral reef restoration on the national agenda of the country (27%) than on the priority given by government agencies to promoting and encouraging coral reef restoration (13%).

These observation shows that there is **room for the public sector to take a more active role in initiatives related to coral reef restoration**. Recognizing the need for increased engagement, this presents an **opportunity for public agencies to further contribute to the conservation efforts** and

demonstrate leadership in environment stewardship.

(vii) **Encourage Consistent Support for Coral Reef Restoration**

A view was expressed that more emphasis on the national agenda was placed on coral reef restoration when **supported by international agencies**. While policymakers often engage more actively in coral reef restoration discussions when **prompted by international agencies**, it is important to **cultivate consistent support that extends beyond dialogue**.

Some stakeholders have expressed a desire for **national commitments to be translated into concrete and sustained actions**. This alignment of policy statements with actionable measures would greatly benefit the coral reef restoration initiatives and **reinforce the dedication to environmental preservation**.

(viii) **Digitalization of Permitting Processes**

Participants in the online survey felt that there was **"low level" of automation** in the application and approval process for the required permit. This may be a contributing factor to the time frame taken for the permit application and approval process (*"several months" as noted by the survey results*).

(ix) **Public Sector Capacity & Role**

- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Tourism businesses emphasize the importance of enhancing public sector institutional capacity to provide technical assistance and for **monitoring and evaluation** processes.

Monitoring activities and outcomes related to coral reef restoration is critical to ensuring that the goals related to protection, conservation and restoration are consistently in compliance with sustainability principles.

- **Coordination and Collaboration:** Government involvement in **coordination and collaboration** is also noted by the private & NGO sectors. They note that the establishment of the Dominican Coastal Restoration Consortium (CDRC), a Multi-Stakeholder Partnership, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, highlights the importance of government involvement in coordinating and evaluating coral reef restoration projects.

Overall, they underscore the need for **robust support from the public sector to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of coral reef restoration efforts.**

(x) **Collaboration and Initiatives**

Local businesses, including investor groups like Grupo Puntacana and Iberostar Hotel Group, which operate hotel resorts in the Dominican Republic, has been actively involved in restoring coral reefs and establishing protected areas to secure the coastal landscape and the livelihoods of coastal inhabitants.

They have seen and appreciate the advantages of collaboration with NGOs and diverse partners, including local and international non-governmental organizations, diving operators, and the Dominican Government. This collaboration has been instrumental in driving coral reef restoration initiatives.

- (xi) **Sustainable Practices and Financial Support**
- While global hotel groups have been actively financing conservation efforts and working on developing financially sustainable models, the majority of the

financing is sourced from international funding applications.

Public sector support to further access financing mechanisms for coral reef restoration initiatives in the Dominican Republic, is seen as necessary. The IDB Sustainable Coastal Management project is noted as a demonstration of the role by government to access funding in support of coral reef restoration and the involvement of the tourism industry.

(xii) **Other Socially Responsible & Inclusive Policies**

It must be noted that the largest stakeholder in coral reef restoration in the Dominican Republic, i.e., also has a corporate policy that involve the following in their coral reef restoration activities:

- Women
- Youths
- Community, and
- Public Sector Partnership.

Smaller, local dive centers that contributed to this analysis, do not have such policies but engage with Punta Cana and, as they do so, they are able to engage in wider partnerships.

(xiii) **Existing Regulatory Framework**

While there may be no specific policy for tourism industry participation in coral reef restoration and the support and priority of the public sector can be improved, the tourism industry felt that there is overall still a **friendly regulatory framework** for coral reef restoration. In addition, they note that the process for **obtaining permits is agile.**

Feedback from stakeholders indicated that, while an Environmental Permit was required from the Ministry of the Environment, and the

permit could take several months to obtain, the permit covered a period of two (2) years and applicants were not required to obtain any additional or specific permits for:

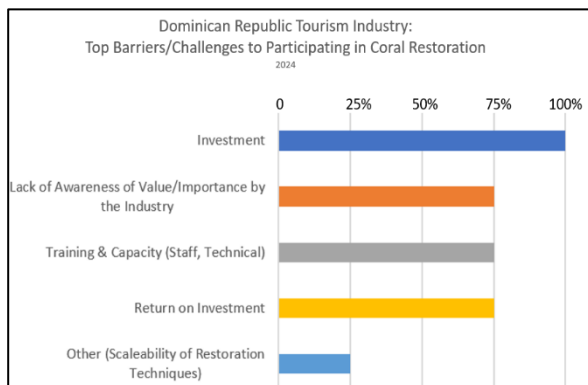
- Coral nursery development and maintenance experiences in which they were involved;
- Coral out-planting (restorative dive) experiences; or
- Coral monitoring.

This allowed the **agility needed to engage in coral reef restoration activities** whether it is a **tourism industry business or not**. This agility is a **preference of existing entities** in coral reef restoration in the Dominican Republic.

The agility of the existing framework is also seen to reflect the willingness from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources to collaborate and support the work undertaken by the stakeholders involved in coral reef restoration.

(xiv) Barriers to Participation in Coral Reef Restoration

Figure 7: Challenges to Participation in Coral Reef Restoration: DR 2024

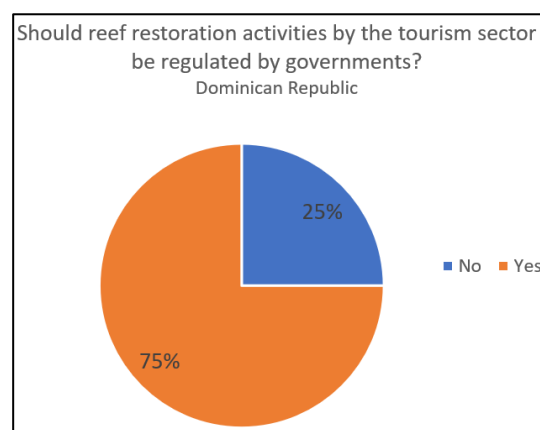


As indicated in **Figure 7**, respondents felt that the **investment** required to participate in coral reef restoration was the highest barrier to the industry's involvement. This is followed by **lack of awareness and staff training**. The **technical aspects of restoration techniques** are also seen as challenges.

(xv) Regulation of Coral Reef Restoration Activities

As noted in **Figure 8**, there is a general agreement that coral reef restoration activities by the tourism sector should be regulated by government.

Figure 8: Should Coral Reef Restoration be Regulated?



Comments from stakeholders include:

Yes, for more control and guidelines

Yes. Organizations that do restoration without a scientific basis or without using best practices can do more harm than good.

It makes sense to centralize restoration activities with qualified, professional, experienced organizations and avoid mass restoration by unqualified, underfunded or poorly trained organizations. This means limiting dive shops, hotels, tour operators, and some NGOs from doing restoration for promotional purposes

5.2.1 Summary of Key Survey Findings: Dominican Republic

Table 1: Summary of Key Survey Findings- Dominican Republic

#	Importance/Priority of:	To:	Importance /Priority (0 = none & 6 = highest)	Priority (% ¹⁰)
1	Coral Reefs	the economy of the Dominican Republic	6	100%
2	Coral Reef Restoration	your business	5.2	87%
3	Coral Reef Restoration	your business plan	4	67%
4	Promoting/Encouraging Reef Restoration	Government Agencies	0.8	13%
5	Coral Reef Restoration	the National Agenda of the Dominican Republic	1.6	27%
6	Easing the entry and operation of local tourism businesses in Coral Reef Restoration	Government Agencies	0.4	7%

5.3 FEEDBACK FROM PUBLIC AGENCIES

The government acknowledges the dedicated efforts of the private sector and the numerous stakeholders involved in coral reef restoration initiatives. It recognizes the imperative of enhancing national capacity and securing additional funding for these critical projects.

Moreover, there is a deep understanding of the importance of fostering inter institutional collaboration between government agencies, particularly the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Environment acknowledges the pressing need to approve the bill “*Ley Sectorial de la Zona Costera Marina y sus Recursos*” (*Sectoral Law of the Coastal Marine Zone and its Resources*), which has been **pending approval for over 15 years**.

Additionally, there is a clear recognition of the significance of **drafting regulations for coastal management**. The law encompasses the following crucial aspects:

(i) Economic Valuation of Coastal Ecosystems

The law recognizes the significant contribution of coastal and marine ecosystems to the economy of the Dominican Republic. It emphasizes the need for greater investment in protecting these ecosystems, including better management of marine fisheries, protection of existing reserves, and enforcement of coastal development guidelines.

(ii) Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

The law establishes an EEZ extending up to 200 nautical miles from the country’s territorial sea baseline, granting the coastal state exclusive rights to exploit or conserve resources within this zone, including living resources such as fish and non-living resources such as oil,

¹⁰ Interpretation: Respondents could rate the priority of an item out of 6 (0 = no importance/priority to 6 = highest importance/priority). The percentages reflect the averages of responses (i.e. all 5 respondents replied with 6 = 100%, all respondents replied with 0 = 0%)

natural gas, and minerals. It also allows for offshore energy generation and the establishment of artificial islands, installations, and structures.

Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of marine scientific research and the protection and preservation of the marine environment through Marine Protected Areas.

(iii) Sustainable Tourism and Environmental Protection

The law addresses the vulnerability of coastal and marine zones to climate change and emphasizes the need for sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism. It prioritizes the characterization of vulnerability and the formulation of complementary adaptation measures to support the strategy and investments of the Dominican state in the coastal tourism sector.

(iv) Conservation and Sustainable Management

The law emphasizes the duty of coastal states to conserve and manage natural resources within their EEZs in a sustainable manner. It includes the responsibility to protect and preserve the marine environment, prevent pollution, maintain biodiversity, and enforce environmental regulations within the EEZ.

The government also understands that taking a more holistic approach is essential, encompassing robust oversight of overfishing, waste and water management, biodiversity conservation, technological innovation, reducing the impact of human activity, control of invasive and harmful

species, and the implementation of best practices for coral reef restoration.

It is also imperative to constantly update oversight mechanisms to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.

5.4 BEST PRACTICE CASE STUDY: CDRC



The collaborative efforts between the Dominican Coastal Restoration Consortium (CDRC) and the Ministry of Environment represent a unique and innovative approach to conservation in the Dominican Republic.

This collaboration aligns with the principles of integrated landscape conservation planning, emphasizing the importance of suitable habitats for species and the need to consider social and economic systems connected to biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The CDRC's collaboration with the Ministry of Environment demonstrates a forward-thinking approach to conservation, incorporating multi-stakeholder engagement and cooperation. By working closely with the CDRC, The Ministry leverages the expertise and resources of the CDRC to ensure the success of coral reef restoration and conservation initiatives. This [collaborative model](#) allows for the **integration of diverse perspectives, knowledge, and resources, leading to more effective and sustainable conservation outcomes.**

Furthermore, the CDRC's approach reflects a commitment to shared priorities, leadership,

and evidence-based decision-making, aligning with best practices in conservation efforts. By fostering cooperative action planning and engaging with various stakeholders, the CDRC and the Ministry of Environment create opportunities for more comprehensive and impactful conservation strategies.

Developed by the CDRC, the "*Manual para la Evaluación de Viveros de Coral*" (*Manual for the Evaluation of Coral Nurseries*) is an essential handbook for the assessment of coral nurseries within the Dominican Republic, designed to **align coral reef restoration projects with best practices** and the environmental standards set forth by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.



This manual delineates the protocols for setting up, maintaining, and evaluating coral nurseries both underwater and on land, encompassing site selection, structural design, type of coral nurseries, coral handling, and the final transplanting of corals to reefs¹¹.

Leveraging this manual, project managers can enhance the likelihood of success in

their mission to rejuvenate damaged reefs. Furthermore, the manual provides the Ministry of Environment with a **standardized assessment tool** to ensure that coral reef restoration initiatives are carried out responsibly and effectively, aiding in the conservation of marine ecosystems.

Adherence to these guidelines by restoration practitioners not only ensures compliance with legal and ecological standards but also bolsters the ministry's conservation goals, playing a pivotal role in the sustainable management and revitalization of coral populations in the Dominican Republic.

5.5 LESSONS LEARNT BY STAKEHOLDERS

Following are lessons learnt and recommendations by the experience of the key stakeholders involved in coral reef restoration in the Dominican Republic:

- (i) **Collaboration is best** so as to, inter alia, avoid isolated restoration efforts, which brings minimal impact.

In fact, the collective endeavors undertaken in the Dominican Republic, highlight the **significance of public-private partnerships in driving coral reef restoration and conservation efforts in the country.**

- (ii) addressing this critical issue or coral reef restoration requires:
 - the development of a **robust protection/restoration plan and effective management strategies** for this invaluable resource, and establishing them as the foremost priority;

¹¹ Manual para la Evaluación de Viveros de Coral"
https://www.redarrecifaldominicana.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Manual_CDRC_compress_FINAL-1.pdf

- the subsequent implementation of a **comprehensive monitoring plan**. This is imperative to enable the identification of specific research needs and the formulation of necessary intervention strategies;
- further investment in **innovative technology and artificial intelligence** (AI) to enhance coral reef restoration efficiency and resource utilization;

NB: The collaboration among TNC, FGPC and FUNDEMAR, in conjunction with various stakeholders, is aimed at establishing a dedicated HUB for the Dominican Republic. This initiative will not only facilitate the implementation of advanced technologies but also contribute to the dissemination of knowledge and expertise throughout the wider Caribbean region.

- **sustainable financing** for sustained coral reef restoration. Sustainable financing is imperative for long-term conservation.

NB: The Dominican Republic is exploring innovative funding avenues, including blue bonds and carbon financing, which can provide financial incentives for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), crucial for the management of marine resources, and often come with associated funding for conservation activities. This comprehensive approach aims to arrest the degradation of the

nation's coral reefs, fostering their ability to recover and thrive, thereby committing to the protection and revitalization of these vital habitats for the enjoyment and sustenance of generations to come.

- that projects **cease focusing solely on the quantification of coral plantings** and instead emphasize the assessment of functionality indicators, such as improvements in reef complexity, fish biomass, and the presence of other crucial invertebrates. Shifting the focus to functionality indicators will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the ecological impact and effectiveness of restoration efforts; and
- effectively finding additional avenues to **scaling-up coral reef restoration** efforts. This means that as many strategies as possible are taken that can allow coral reef restoration on a far greater scale in the Dominican Republic. One such strategy considered is the **increased participation of the tourism industry**.

5.6 GAP & OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION

GAPS

(i) Communication Gap & Functional Overlap

There is a lack of communication between critical governmental agencies involved in the environment and tourism, such as the **Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Tourism, and CODOPESCA**. There is also some **overlapping of functions within the Ministry of Environment**. This creates weaknesses in the legal framework for coral reef restoration efforts in the Dominican Republic.

(ii) Institutional Capacity and Resources

The Ministry of Environment faces several institutional **capacity gaps that hinder its ability to support effective coral reef restoration**, including:

- **Human Capital:** One of the primary challenges is the lack of human capital; there is a shortage of trained marine scientists and coastal engineers who are essential for designing, implementing, and managing coral conservation projects.

This gap in expertise limits the country's ability to execute proper oversight and provide necessary technical assistance to ongoing coral reef restoration initiatives.

- **Limited Resources:** Additionally, the Ministry of Environment struggles with limited resources. Without adequate funding and logistical support, the capacity to carry out extensive coral reef restoration and conservation projects is significantly constrained.

This limitation not only affects the scale and scope of restoration efforts but also the ability to engage in long-term monitoring and adaptive management of coral ecosystems.

(iii) Limitations of the Ministry of Tourism

On the tourism front, the Ministry of Tourism (MITUR) has a critical role in promoting responsible tourism practices that support coral conservation. However, MITUR faces its own set of challenges, including:

- **Sustainable Tourism/Environmental Regulations:** MITUR primary focus is to promote sustainable tourism practices rather than enforcing environmental

protection regulations. The tourism industry must, however, abide by environmental regulations that impact upon the sustainable tourism practices they implement. There appears to be a disconnect between linking environmental regulations and sustainable practices by the tourism sector in MITUR's mandate to **foster a tourism industry** that prioritizes sustainability.

- **Collaboration Gaps:** There are gaps in the level of direct collaboration between MITUR and The Ministry of Environment to ensure that tourism development does not come at the expense of the very natural resources that attract visitors to the island.

(iv) Coastal Zone Management and Conservation Framework

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is a recognized approach that uses scientific data to balance natural resource use with sustainable development, yet the Dominican Republic faces challenges in fully implementing this strategy.

Despite having regulatory tools for managing coastal and marine resources, the country **lacks a comprehensive regulatory framework for disaster risk management and climate change adaptation that would establish an integrated coastal and marine policy**. This leads to unclear and overlapping institutional roles and responsibilities, as well as outdated and fragmented management across different institutions.

Moreover:

- there is a significant gap in the **availability of updated, integrated data and risk analyses for coastal zones, which hampers effective policy design and decision-making;**

- the absence of modern, digital systems for monitoring coastal and marine resources, along with a lack of models to project climate change effects, such as sea-level rise and extreme weather events, exacerbates this issue.

Consequently:

- there is a shortfall in identifying and prioritizing necessary investments and measures for managing coastal areas and mitigating risks.

(v) **Ley Sectorial de Conservación Costera y Marina**

The Dominican Republic's regulatory framework for coral conservation is at a critical juncture with the pending approval of the "Ley Sectorial de Conservación Costera y Marina." This law is poised to address some of the current gaps in the legal and institutional structures that have hindered effective coral reef restoration and protection. The proposed legislation aims to establish clear guidelines for the use and management of coastal and marine ecosystems, including the creation of management categories for species and setting periods of prohibition for the capture of specimens requiring special protection.

One of the main challenges in approving and implementing this law is the existing lack of coordination among institutional mandates and policies. The absence of a unified approach has led to unclear and overlapping responsibilities, which complicates the management of coral conservation efforts.

Furthermore, the delay in passing the law since its introduction in 2010 indicates a

need for increased prioritization of coral conservation in the national agenda.

On the other hand, the law presents significant opportunities. Once approved, it can provide a much-needed legal backbone for the conservation and sustainable use of the Dominican Republic's coastal and marine resources. The law would facilitate the establishment of specific regulations and spatial planning instruments that are currently perceived as lacking or outdated. It also has the potential to catalyze the development of an integrated, updated digital system for monitoring coastal and marine resources, which is crucial for informed decision-making and effective management.

The law's approval could also stimulate the identification of adaptation opportunities and investments for coastal protection, addressing the current deficit in financing for sustainable management of coastal zones. Moreover, it could encourage the development of specialized educational programs and technical expertise in marine sciences, which are essential for the design and supervision of coral reef restoration projects.

(vi) **Quantifying Financial Requirements for Coral Reef Restoration Efforts:**

There is a challenge of quantifying the overall investment needed for effective coral reef restoration. This challenge highlights critical deficiencies in environmental research and funding strategies. This lack of detailed and comprehensive data creates a significant obstacle for planners and conservationists who are striving to develop targeted, efficient, and sustainable restoration programs. Without a clear understanding of the financial

requirements, it becomes exceedingly difficult to establish budgets, prioritize actions, and appeal for necessary funds from potential donors and stakeholders.

Additionally, the inability to accurately project the costs associated with different restoration activities – from initial coral planting to long-term monitoring and maintenance – means that funding may either be insufficient or misallocated. This can lead to underfunded projects that fail to achieve their conservation goals or the inefficient use of resources that could have been directed more effectively. Ultimately, this data gap can stall significant conservation efforts leaving coral ecosystems vulnerable to ongoing threats such as climate change, pollution, and overfishing.

OPPORTUNITIES

(i) Education, Training & Resource Mobilization

Despite the gaps and challenges, there are significant opportunities for both the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Tourism to enhance their support for coral reef restoration. This can be done by:

- investing in education and training programs to develop local expertise in marine conservation, the Ministry of Environment can begin to close the human capital gap.
- Moreover, seeking additional funding and partnerships can provide the resources needed for technical assistance and project oversight.

(ii) InterAmerican Development Bank Loan

Additionally, the [Inter-American Development Bank \(IDB\) loan offers a pivotal opportunity for the Dominican Republic](#) to amplify its coral reef restoration initiatives. By facilitating the integration of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) into the national policy framework, this loan enables the Ministry of Tourism (MITUR) in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment to actively engage in and champion coral conservation efforts.

Such engagement is expected to not only enhance the sustainability and appeal of the nation's tourist destinations but also reinforce the resilience of coastal ecosystems against climate change impacts.

The financial influx from the IDB thus stands to create a synergy between environmental stewardship and tourism development, positioning MITUR at the forefront of a transition towards more responsible and eco-conscious tourism practices that safeguard and highlight the country's natural marine beauty.

(iii) Increase Financial Insight

To effectively tackle the complexities of quantifying financial needs for coral reef restoration, the government should take the opportunity to strategically invest in comprehensive studies aimed at deciphering the economic facets of coral conservation. This pivotal funding for research represents a significant step to bridge the existing gaps in cost analysis for diverse restoration activities, from initial planning to ongoing maintenance. Armed with this critical financial insight, planners and conservationists will be better equipped to formulate precise budgets and prioritize initiatives accurately. Such clarity in financial requirements will enable government

agencies, donors and stakeholders to optimize resource allocation, ensuring that investments are neither insufficient nor misplace.

(iv) **Increased Collaboration: MOE/ANAMAR**

The potential collaboration between the **National Authority of Maritime Affairs (ANAMAR)** and the **Ministry of Environment** could present an exciting opportunity to transform the **National Aquarium** into a center for coral reef restoration and marine conservation.

Moving away from the traditional exhibit-driven model, the National Aquarium could become a specialized training facility for restoration technicians, scientists, aquarists, aqua-culturists, and other professionals in integrated coastal zone management (ICZM).

By directing the exhibits toward public education on the risks to Caribbean habitats, the National Aquarium could significantly strengthen its conservation mission and attract substantial international funding.

The existing infrastructure of the National Aquarium serves as a solid foundation for a broader conservation mission and offers the potential for partnerships, whether through a public-private collaboration or a government-led initiative. Moreover, establishing **connections with international or local universities** could further enhance its impact.

NB:



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- *The National Aquarium is a 34,500 m² facility that was inaugurated in 1990 as a marine zoo and is one of the most visited spots by locals and visitors alike.*

The facility has 90 fresh and salty water fish tanks and seven ponds where a vast range of tropical fishes can be seen. It also houses an auditorium offering information for visitors about the kind of fishes and the way of life etc. In the center of the facility there is a plexiglass tunnel that goes along the interior of the pools making it possible for individuals to see the marine fauna above and next to them.

- *The Ministry of Environment's is collaborating with **MONACO for the National Aquarium's transformation**. This indicates the potential for significant support in advancing marine conservation. This partnership with MONACO represents a promising opportunity to leverage resources and expertise to elevate the National Aquarium's role in coral reef restoration and marine conservation efforts.*

*However, it's important to acknowledge that the project may encounter challenges due to existing **communication gaps** between authorities, such as ANAMAR and the Ministry of Environment.*

*The opportunity to address these **communication gaps** will be essential to ensure the effective progress of the project and to maximize the potential impact of the National Aquarium's transformation.*

(v) **MITUR/MOE Collaboration**

There is an opportunity for MITUR to also leverage its influence to **promote eco-friendly and adventure tourism initiatives**, creating a **market for conservation that benefits both the environment and the economy**.

By working together, both MITUR and MOE can foster a more sustainable approach to tourism and environmental management, ensuring that the Dominican Republic's coral reefs — and the communities that depend on them — thrive for generations to come.

(vi) **Integrated Policy Framework**

There is room and opportunity for the country to develop a coordinated cross-sector approach to establish a clear and **integrated policy framework**.

(vii) **Reinforcement of Commitment to Environmental Stewardship**

There is an **opportunity for public agencies to further contribute to conservation efforts and demonstrate leadership in environment stewardship** by playing a more active role in initiatives related to coral reef restoration and its promotion.

(viii) **Digital Monitoring System**

By investing in an updated **digital monitoring system** and **climate change projection models**, the Dominican Republic can improve its management of coastal and marine areas.

(ix) **Investment Incentives** Identifying and prioritizing investments for coastal protection and creating financial incentives for private sector alignment with ICZM can address the financing deficit. Furthermore, developing **educational programs in coastal engineering and environmental science** can build the necessary human resource capacity to support these initiatives. These steps would not only strengthen the country's resilience to environmental

challenges but also enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of coral reef restoration efforts.

(x) **Funding Sustainability**

Opportunities for funding coral reef restoration and the involvement of the tourism industry is critical. Coral reef restoration efforts have historically suffered from unreliable funding sources, such as inconsistent grants and donations, which impede the ability to sustain and expand these initiatives.

Compounding these issues is the limited involvement of the public sector which could provide substantial funding but remains largely unengaged. The rapid but uncontrolled launch of many coral nursery initiatives has led to their premature decline due to insufficient oversight.

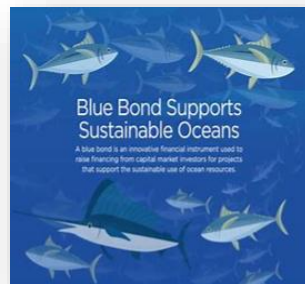
The following four (4) innovating funding sources may provide additional opportunities for consideration, i.e.:

- (1) Multi-stakeholder Partnership Conservation
- (2) Trust Blue Bonds
- (3) Carbon Credits
- (4) Specialized Sovereign Loans
- (5) Impact Investing; and
- (6) Industry Taxes

(1) **Multi-Stakeholder Partnership:** The establishment of a Marine Conservation Trust in the Dominican Republic presents a significant opportunity to centralize and enhance the efforts for coral reef restoration and broader conservation initiatives that involves the participation of the tourism industry. The trust could serve as a pivotal mechanism for managing and allocating

resources more effectively, leveraging innovative financing mechanisms such as blue bonds and carbon credits to ensure a sustainable funding stream. This trust could not only consolidate coral reef restoration projects under a unified strategic framework but also extend its benefits to include other vital conservation activities, promoting environmental stewardship and sustainable economic opportunities. By fostering collaboration among government agencies, NGOs, the tourism industry and international conservation bodies, the trust could create a robust partnership that aligns with the Dominican Republic's economic and environmental strategies, thereby enhancing the resilience and sustainability of its marine ecosystems.

- (2) **BLUE BONDS:** Blue bonds are an innovative financing mechanism that can be leveraged to support coral reef restoration



efforts sustainably. Similar to green bonds, blue bonds are debt instruments issued by governments, development banks, or corporations, but they are specifically focused on financing marine and ocean-based projects.

The proceeds from these bonds are used to fund initiatives that can include coral reef restoration, sustainable fisheries, and pollution reduction efforts. By tapping into the debt capital markets, blue bonds provide a way for investors to contribute to

ocean health while receiving a financial return, making them an attractive option for both conservation and investment portfolios.

Hotels and private sector entities can participate as investors, providing the capital needed for blue bond issuances that fund marine conservation projects, including coral reef restoration. By investing in blue bonds, they can earn a financial return while supporting environmental sustainability, which can improve their corporate image and appeal to eco-friendly tourists.

Additionally, these entities can **lobby for and support the development of government policies** that facilitate the issuance of blue bonds, creating a favorable environment for sustainable marine investments. Engaging in these innovative financing mechanisms allows the **private sector to play a crucial role in marine conservation while potentially benefiting from financial returns and enhanced brand reputation.**

Corporations can also issue blue bonds, although this is less common than sovereign blue bonds issued by governments. When a corporation decides to issue a blue bond, it is essentially raising funds from investors with the promise to repay the principal along with interest at a later date. The funds raised from these bonds are earmarked for financing projects that have positive environmental impacts on marine and ocean ecosystems, including coral reef restoration efforts.

The bond market in the Dominican Republic **has the potential to mature and effectively support the issuance of blue bonds**, especially with the backing of multilateral agencies that can help define and structure these

instruments. The country's bond market already handles sovereign debt and corporate bonds, indicating an **existing framework that could be adapted for blue bonds**. These are specialized financial tools designed to fund marine and ocean-related activities, including coral reef restoration, which are crucial for the Dominican Republic given its reliance on coastal and marine resources for tourism and fishing industries.

Multilateral agencies have a track record of supporting such innovative financing mechanisms, as seen in other markets including The Bahamas and Barbados, and can offer the necessary expertise and credibility to attract investors. Their involvement can ensure that the blue bonds are not only financially sound but also have clear environmental impact metrics and use-of-proceeds guidelines. This support is vital for the Dominican Republic to leverage blue bonds effectively, as it would provide assurance to investors about the environmental benefits and the financial integrity of their investments.

With the right structure and support, blue bonds could unlock significant capital for the Dominican Republic to invest in the sustainability of its marine ecosystems, which in turn supports its economy and the well-being of its coastal communities.

- (3) **CARBON CREDITS:** Carbon credits offer another avenue for financing coral reef restoration. Projects that protect or



rehabilitate blue carbon ecosystems—such as mangroves, seagrasses, and coral reefs—can generate carbon credits by sequestering carbon dioxide. These credits can then be sold on carbon markets, providing a financial incentive for restoration and conservation activities.

Hotels and the tourism sector can engage in carbon credit schemes by investing in projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By funding these projects, they can generate carbon credits that can be sold on carbon markets, offsetting their own carbon footprint.

This not only contributes to the global fight against climate change but also aligns with the growing trend of environmentally conscious travel.

- (4) **SPECIALISED SOVEREIGN LOANS:** Like the Sustainable Coastal Management Project (DR-L1154) facilitated by the Inter-American Development Bank and implemented by MITUR, these loans can be earmarked for coral reef restoration efforts. Such financial instruments can supply the Dominican Republic with the critical initial funding required for extensive coral rehabilitation initiatives. The conditions of these loans can be tailored to acknowledge the enduring advantages that coral ecosystems offer, including the augmentation of fisheries, tourism, and coastal fortification—all of which play pivotal roles in the nation's economy and the prosperity of its coastal communities.

Ideally, the repayment obligations of these loans would be calibrated to the vitality of the coral habitats or the economic gains they foster, thereby harmonizing the loan's fiscal

performance with the ecological state of the coral reefs.

- (5) **IMPACT INVESTING:** Impact Investing also provides an opportunity as a vital strategy for financing coral reef restoration, targeting capital investment in projects that yield environmental benefits alongside financial returns. In so doing, this marries investor interests with ecological sustainability.



A diverse range of stakeholders, including individuals, corporations, financial institutions, and governments, are increasingly drawn to such investments, driven by altruistic motives, strategic economic considerations, and risk management pertaining to environmental degradation.

Whether it's through CSR initiatives, specialized investment funds, or policy-supported incentives, these entities are funneling funds into the development of innovative coral reef restoration techniques, support for community reef management, and advanced monitoring technologies.

These innovative financing mechanisms, when effectively implemented, can create a

sustainable financial ecosystem that not only supports the immediate needs of coral reef restoration but also ensures the long-term preservation and resilience of coral reef ecosystems.

By **aligning financial returns with environmental health**, these mechanisms can mobilize the capital necessary to **address the urgent need for coral conservation and restoration** on a global scale and certainly within the Dominican Republic.

- (6) **TOURISM INDUSTRY TAXES:** In consultation with the private sector, considerations may go into incorporating a tourism industry tax into the upcoming Fiscal Reform in the Dominican Republic. This could offer a strategic approach to funding coral reef restoration initiatives. By implementing a modest tax on tourism related activities and accommodation, this reform would generate a dedicated revenue stream for sustaining coral health and aligning economic growth with environmental stewardship. Such a measure can not only secure the long-term viability of the tourism industry but also position the Dominican Republic as a leader in sustainable tourism practices. Including this underscores the government's commitment to a balanced development strategy that harmonizes economic progress with the preservation of natural resources.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

(i) Ecological and Economic Significance

Coral reefs are crucial for biodiversity. The coral reefs of the Dominican Republic are not just underwater spectacles; they are biodiversity hotspots. These reefs provide habitat for a myriad of marine species and are integral to maintaining the health of the ocean's ecosystems.

(ii) Economic Backbone for Tourism

The tourism sector, which leans heavily on the natural beauty and recreational opportunities provided by these reefs, is a cornerstone of the Dominican Republic's economy. The health of the coral reefs is directly tied to the health of the tourism industry and, by extension, the nation's GDP.

(iii) Positive Strides in Coral Reef Restoration

There has been commendable progress in the restoration of coral reefs in the Dominican Republic. The projects, events and activities in the country continually promote, encourage and support conservation and coral reef restoration efforts.

(iv) Importance of Collaborative Efforts

This success of the progress made in the Dominican Republic related to coral reef restoration is attributed to the collective efforts of various stakeholders, including local non-governmental organizations, private entities, and international conservation bodies. The synergy between these groups has been pivotal in advancing restoration techniques and implementing

projects that aim to rehabilitate these delicate marine ecosystems.

(v) The issue of Tourism-based Restorative Diving

Tourism-based restorative diving is not viewed by the major stakeholders in coral reef restoration as an approach that effectively funds or impacts coral reef restoration in the Dom Rep.

Recreational scuba diving that incorporates coral reef restoration activities (restorative dive), in other countries such as The Bahamas (Bahamas Reef Rescue Network) offers a compelling blend of adventure and conservation, providing tourists with an immersive experience, adds to the tourism product offering, and directly supports reef rehabilitation efforts. In the Dom Rep, however, this model is not considered appropriate based on the experience of the stakeholders involved as the revenue streams were not sufficient to justify the level of investments.



The major stakeholders in the Dom Rep are, therefore, considering turning more to creating a Private Conservation Trust and are exploring different models.

(vi) Policy Framework: Balanced Approach

Overall, the policy framework for coral reef restoration in the Dominican Republic underscores the importance of a balanced approach that protects coral ecosystems while facilitating sustainable economic

development. This is particularly within the tourism sector, which significantly relies on healthy coral reefs. The framework is designed to be **adaptable**, allowing for the **integration of new scientific knowledge and technologies** to enhance restoration outcomes and ensure the resilience of coral ecosystems in the face of environmental changes.

(vii) **Legislation Re Coral Reef Restoration & Tourism**

Even though there is no specific legislation related to coral reef restoration and the involvement of the tourism industry, the existing policy framework has provided the flexibility needed by tourism businesses that work collaboratively with the government and NGOs to carry out coral reef restoration efforts.

(viii) **Guidelines & Bureaucracy Coral Reef Restoration**

Given the rapid and pressing nature of reef degradation, it is crucial to **avoid creating an overly burdensome and bureaucratic policy framework and permitting process** that could hinder restoration efforts.

It must be noted that the guidelines developed by the DCRC for carrying out coral reef restoration are not legislated. They are used, however, by the Department of Environment as a tool to evaluate applications related to coral reef restoration and marine activities.

Overall, the current situation appears to work in the Dominican Republic among the existing stakeholders as the legal framework is not overly bureaucratic.

(ix) **Permitting Process**

It is essential to streamline the permitting process without sacrificing thoroughness and effectiveness. Rapid responses and the ability for qualified, reputable entities to conduct controlled restoration experiments are imperative.

(x) **Institutional capacity limitations:** The institutions tasked with overseeing and managing coral reef restoration often face challenges due to limited capacity. This can manifest as a lack of technical expertise, inadequate manpower, or insufficient logistical support.

(xi) **Funding shortages:** A major hurdle for coral reef restoration is the lack of sufficient funding. Restoration projects are often expensive and require sustained investment. The scarcity of financial resources can limit the scale and scope of restoration initiatives.

6.2 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) **Strengthen Policy Framework**

Develop and enforce comprehensive policies that support coral reef conservation and sustainable tourism practices. The Ministry of Tourism as an Executive Agency of the current Sustainable Coastal Management Project financed by the IDB should collaborate with CDRC and RAD members and the Ministry of Environment and ensure that the proposed policy framework is in alignment with the Coral Reef Restoration Framework and Best Practices and overall national goals for conservation.

(ii) **Increase Institutional Capacity**

Invest in training and resources to build the capacity of local institutions managing coral reef restoration and conservation programs.

The Ministry of Environment will need to identify sustainable funding sources to increase institutional capacity.

(iii) **Sustainable Tourism Practices**

Encourage and implement tourism practices that minimize environmental impact and promote the health of coral reefs.

(iv) **Community Engagement and Education**

Engage local communities and stakeholders in coral reef restoration efforts through education and by providing opportunities for active participation.

(v) **Funding and Investment**

Funding for coral reef restoration projects and for the engagement of the tourism industry must be secured. Funding sources must include public-private partnerships or a multi-stakeholder partnership conservation trust initiative with the support of government, international funding and other innovative funding such as Blue Bonds and Carbon Credits etc.

(vi) **Research and Monitoring**

Support ongoing research and long-term monitoring of coral reef health to inform

management strategies and measure the effectiveness of restoration efforts.

(vii) **Climate Change Mitigations**

Address broader environmental issues such as climate change, which significantly impact coral reefs, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions through carbon credits mechanisms and enhancing the resilience of marine ecosystems.

(viii) **Enforcement of Regulations**

Ensure that existing regulations to protect coral reefs are adequately enforced, particularly in areas of urban development and tourism.

(ix) **Collaborative Efforts**

Foster collaboration among government agencies, NGOs, the tourism sector, and international partners to scale up coral reef restoration and conservation efforts.

(x) **Innovative Techniques**

Explore and implement innovative coral reef restoration techniques, including assisted reproduction and the sustainability of existing coral labs, to enhance recovery rates of coral populations including the use of cutting-edge technologies like AI, robotics, blockchain.



7. CLOSING STATEMENT

It is evident that the current strategic approach to coral reef restoration in the Dom Rep by the major stakeholders involved in coral reef restoration is **skewed more toward conservation – to increase the**

value of the natural capital of tourism investments.

Emphasis is not placed on coral reef restoration as an economic activity in which specialized coral reef restoration packages are

offered as paid visitor experiences that can increase restoration efforts.

Based on the current strategic approach, the focus is, therefore, on the overcoming the challenge of securing financial sustainability for conservation activities.

To this end consideration is going into innovative financing mechanisms like blue bonds, carbon credits, impact investing and sovereign loans to fund increased coral reef restoration activities in which they are engaged.

With no specific legal or regulatory framework for the tourism industry's participation in coral reef restoration coupled with the currently flexible framework and limited public sector monitoring, there is no guarantee that increased participation of the wider tourism industry will not jeopardize the situation further.

The report recognizes, therefore, that, to more effectively enable coral reef restoration in the Dominican Republic with the increased participation of the tourism industry, a [strengthened policy framework](#) must be considered and the [buy-in of the major stakeholders](#) is necessary.

STRENGTHENED FRAMEWORK

In the first instance, a strengthened framework would demonstrate public sector leadership in environmental stewardship and would involve one that:

- creates policies that support sustainable tourism practices;

- recognizes the opportunity offered by the involvement of tourism in coral reef restoration;
- avoids creating an overly burdensome and bureaucratic policy framework and permitting process;
- ensures that the activities of divers contribute positively to coral reef health;
- establishes guidelines for the creation and maintenance of coral nurseries;
- set standards for diver education on reef conservation techniques;
- regulate the number of divers and tours to minimize ecological impact;
- provides incentives for local businesses that participate in coral reef conservation and restoration efforts; and
- establishes partnerships between government entities, non-profits, and dive operators to oversee and fund restoration projects.

By aligning conservation goals with economic incentives, such a framework would not only **protect and restore coral ecosystems** but also **support the local economy** through responsible tourism.

REGIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE

Finally, in the second instance, and in moving ahead, the report highly recommends that a [Regional Policy Dialogue on Coral Reef Restoration](#) is organized in which stakeholders from the Dominican Republic are invited to participate.

This Dialogue would help to discuss regulatory frameworks, best practices, institutional capacity, governance, and innovative funding

mechanisms, and should aim to exchange knowledge, attract donors, and foster cooperation.

Most importantly, it will allow greater buy-in by stakeholders in the Dominican Republic to strengthen the country's policy framework to specifically facilitate coral reef restoration with the participation of the tourism industry.



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ANNEXES 1 – 8

ANNEX 1

List of Key Tourism Organizations Involved in Reef Restoration in Dominican Republic

	Name	Main sector Activity	Level of involvement	Financing Mechanism	Collaborating Partners
1	Grupo Punta Cana	Hotel Resorts Operators, Developers and Airports Operators	Pioneer player: Directly through Private NGO Fundacion Grupo Punta Cana and Marine Innovation Lab	Private and international grants	Fundemar, Dominican Reef Network, Dominican Consortium for Coral Reef Restoration, government, TNC, international conservation agencies, international cooperation.
2	Iberostar Group	Hotel Resorts, Tour Operator	Actively Involved: Directly through wave of change Initiative and Sustainable practices	Private	Industry stakeholders, NGOs and government
3	Cap Cana Group	Hotel resorts, Developers	Newcomer player: Directly through Private NGO Fundacion Cap Cana.	Private	Limited
4	Riu and Catalonia Hotels	Hotel resorts	Indirectly: Through Sustainable practices and financing local NGOs	Private	Limited

ANNEX 2

List Overview of Key Policy Framework Indicators

OVERVIEW OF KEY POLICY FRAMEWORK INDICATORS: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC					
#	INDICATORS	SUMMARY FINDING	#	INDICATORS	SUMMARY FINDING
1	Key Public Sector/ Governing Bodies Impacting Coral Reef Restoration	(iii) Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (iv) Dominican Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Navy (Ministry of Defense)	7	Tourism/ Sustainable Tourism	(iv) Limited Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (v) Tourism/Government Push for more Sustainable Tourism Policy in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment. (vi) The Ministry of Environment leads on any topics related to conservation and the management of natural resources.
2	Key Public Sector Regulatory/Agencies for Tourism	Ministry of Tourism	8	Partnerships for Coral Reef Restoration	(iv) Significant NGO/Public/Private Partnerships and Opportunities for Partnership (v) Consortium for the Dominican Coastal Restoration evolving to a public-private Conservation Trust (vi) Need for sustainable financing
3	Agencies most involved in Coral Reef Restoration related Regulation	Vice Ministry of Coastal and Marine Resources	9	Tourism Private Sector Support for Restoration	(iii) Tourism and Private sector operate through NGOs (iv) Best Practice in place but could be updated to integrate innovation and cutting-edge technologies
4	NGOs leading in Coral Reef Restoration Activities & Sensitization	(viii) Fundación Grupo Puntacana (ix) FUNDEMAR (x) TNC (xi) SRC (xii) RAD (xiii) CEBSE (xiv) Iberostar Group	10	Tourism Businesses involved in Coral Reef Restoration	List attached at Annex 1 & include: (v) Grupo Punta Cana at the forefront (vi) Iberostar Group (vii) Cap Cana Group (Recently started) Indirectly through sustainability practices: (viii) Riu and Catalonia Hotels
5	Government Coordination and Procedures	Minimal Public Sector Connection/Linkages between Tourism and Coastal and Marine Conservation and/or Coral Reef Restoration	11	Coral Reef Restoration & Policy	(vi) Significant NGO Operation within this space; (vii) No Policy in place for Coral Reef Restoration (viii) Legislation/Policy on the table/in Development (ix) Limited funding / Funding mainly from international grants (x) No institutional capacity
6	Permit/Licen sing Procedures	(iv) Friendly Regulatory Framework for Coral Reef Restoration Activities (v) Agile permitting/licensing procedures (vi) Lack of Public institutional capacity and resources for projects oversight and technical assistance	12	Existing Frameworks for Coral Reef Management, Conservation, and/or Restoration Implementation in Tourism Sector	Currently in development through the DR-L1154 Loan Project "Sustainable Coastal Management" related to the integration of the ICZM.

ANNEX 3

Policy & Gap Analysis Summary

#	POLICY ANALYSIS				
	Area	Issue	Obstacle/Challenge	Gap	Opportunity
1	Public Institutional Capacity	Limited Public Institutional Capacity within the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Tourism	To oversee and provide technical support to coral reef restoration	Gaps in qualified human capital and resources	Assigned advanced human capital and resources for technical assistance and M&E activities
2	Policy Framework	Lack of a Coastal Zone Management and Conservation Framework, not contemplated in Law 64-00 and Law 202-14	That defines coral reef restoration framework, resources and best practices	Gaps in marine Conservation Policy	Revisit/update Regulatory Framework, approve legislation
3	Financing	Limited financing mechanisms pushing high dependency to sporadic international grants	To support coral reef restoration activities and sustainability	Sustainability gaps	Innovative financing schemes like blue bonds, carbon credits, impact investing and ecotourism.
4	Intergovernmental communication	Silos between and within government agencies generates duplicity and mismanagement of public resources	Ineffective support to coral reef restoration activities	Public policy overlap and limited collaboration	Strengthen collaboration and communication between government agencies
5	PPP: Institutional Arrangements	CDRC multiple partnership model and best practices could be strengthened	Governance structure required and financing	Governance & Financing gaps	Create a Public-Private Conservation Trust to strengthen governance and leverage funding

ANNEX 4

Summary Conclusions

#	SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC CORAL REEF RESTORATION POLICY ANALYSIS		
	Category	Area	Detail
1	Ecological & Economic Significance	<i>Coral reefs are crucial for biodiversity</i>	The coral reefs of the Dominican Republic (Dom Rep) are not just underwater spectacles; they are biodiversity hotspots. These reefs provide habitat for a myriad of marine species and are integral to maintaining the health of the country's ocean ecosystems.
		<i>Economic backbone for tourism</i>	- The tourism sector, which leans heavily on the natural beauty and recreational opportunities provided by these reefs, is a cornerstone of the Dominican Republic's economy. - The health of the coral reefs is directly tied to the health of the tourism industry and, by extension, the nation's GDP.
		<i>National Emphasis on Conservation</i>	Tourism industry partners involved in coral reef restoration prioritize the ecological and conservation aspects (economic benefits to the industry stakeholders involved are not the priority).
2	Notable Progress Heightened by Collaboration	<i>Positive strides in coral reef restoration</i>	- There has been commendable progress in the restoration of coral reefs in the Dom Rep. - Conservation and restoration activities are continually promoted and supported.
		<i>Importance of collaborative efforts</i>	- The success in coral reef restoration is attributed to the collective efforts of various stakeholders, including local non-governmental organizations, private entities, and international conservation bodies. - The synergy of the collective efforts has been pivotal in advancing restoration techniques and in implementing projects that aim to rehabilitate these delicate marine ecosystems.
		<i>Guidelines for Coral Reef Restoration</i>	Guidelines for coral reef restoration are provided under the partnership of the Dominican Consortium for Reef Restoration (DCRC)
3	Policy Framework	<i>A Balance & Flexible Approach</i>	- The policy framework emphasizes a balanced approach to protect coral ecosystems while enabling sustainable economic development. - The framework allows flexibility for coral reef restoration activities by the tourism industry. - Flexibility within the framework also allows for the integration of new scientific knowledge and technologies.
		<i>Permitting Pro</i>	- A permit that covers a period of 2 years is required for coral reef restoration activities. The cost and processing time frame varies. - Streamlining the permitting process without compromise thoroughness and effectiveness is essential.
		<i>Lack of Bureaucracy</i>	- The current legal framework is not considered to be a bureaucratic one. This lack of bureaucracy is beneficial for rapid and unencumbered restoration actions. - Stakeholders involved in coral reef restoration support the existing framework due to its flexibility and its lack of bureaucracy.
		<i>Coral Reef Restoration & Tourism Legislation</i>	- There is no specific legislation for coral reef restoration by the tourism industry or any that specifically targets the participation of the tourism stakeholder. - Still, the current policy framework does not debar participation of the tourism industry
4	Capacity	<i>Institutional capacity Limitations</i>	The institutions tasked with overseeing and managing coral reef restoration often face challenges due to limited capacity. This is manifested as a lack of technical expertise, inadequate manpower, or insufficient logistical support.
5	Funding	<i>Funding Shortages</i>	- A major hurdle for coral reef restoration is the lack of sufficient funding. Restoration projects are often expensive and require sustained investment. - The scarcity of financial resources limits the scale and scope of restoration initiatives.
		<i>Innovative Funding Sources</i>	Multiple Stakeholder Partnership Conservation Trusts, Blue Bonds, Carbon Credits, Specialized Sovereign Loans, Impact Investing and Tourism Industry Taxes are potential mechanisms for sustainable financial support for coral reef restoration.
6	Overall Position	<i>Policy gaps</i>	While there have been advancements, there are still significant gaps in the policy framework that governs coral reef conservation and restoration. These gaps may hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of restoration efforts.

ANNEX 5

Summary Recommendations

#	SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS	
	Action	Details
1	Strengthen Policy Framework	- Develop and enforce a comprehensive national policy that supports coral reef conservation and sustainable tourism practices without creating a burdensome bureaucratic system: - MITUR in consultation with the Ministry of the Environment and Marine Resources and the tourism industry should consider developing and enforcing a national policy that supports coral reef conservation and sustainable tourism. - MITUR, as an Executive Agency of the current Sustainable coastal Management Project financed by the IDB, should collaborate with CDRC and RAD members and the Ministry of Environment and ensure that the proposed policy framework is in alignment with Coral Reef Restoration Framework and Best practices and overall national goals for conservation.
	Coral Reef Restoration Guidelines for Tourism	Establish guidelines for coral nurseries, diver education, and regulate tourism activities to minimize ecological impact.
2	Increase Institutional Capacity	- Invest in training and resources to build the capacity of local institutions managing coral reef restoration and conservation programs in the public sector and private/tourism industry. - The Ministry of Environment will need to identify sustainable funding sources to increase institutional capacity.
3	Sustainable Tourism Practices	Promote, build awareness, encourage and implement practices that minimize environmental impact and promote the health of coral reefs.
4	Community Engagement and Education	Build on the existing relationships that the tourism industry in the Dom Rep has with its local communities to further engage these stakeholders in coral reef restoration efforts through education and by providing ongoing opportunities for active participation.
5	Funding and Investment	- Secure sustainable funding sources for coral reef restoration projects, including multiple stakeholder partnerships, and international funding and innovating funding sources like carbon credits, impact investing and blue bonds. - Provide incentives for local businesses participating in reef conservation
6	Research and Monitoring	Support ongoing research and long-term monitoring of coral reef health to inform management strategies and measure the effectiveness of restoration efforts.
7	Climate Change Mitigations	- Address broader environmental issues such as climate change, which significantly impact coral reefs, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions through carbon credits mechanisms and enhancing the resilience of marine ecosystems. - Demonstrate and emphasize the role of coral reef restoration in achieving the climate change commitments of the country
8	Enforcement of Regulations	- Ensure that existing regulations to protect coral reefs are adequately enforced, particularly in areas of urban development and tourism. - Utilize a Public/Private and community engagement and collaborative approach for enforcement and to reporting and preventing infractions.
9	Collaborative Efforts	- Build upon and/or expand the existing collaborative approach among government agencies, NGOs, the tourism sector, and international partners to scale up coral reef restoration and conservation efforts. - Increase partnerships for oversight and funding of coral reef restoration pro
10	Innovative Techniques	Explore and implement innovative coral reef restoration techniques, including assisted reproduction and the sustainability of existing coral labs, to enhance recovery rates of coral populations including the use of cutting-edge technologies like AI, robotics, blockchain.
11	Knowledge sharing & cooperation	Organize a Regional Policy Dialogue on Coral Reef Restoration to discuss regulatory frameworks, best practices, institutional capacity, governance, and innovative funding mechanisms, aiming to exchange knowledge, attract donors, and foster cooperation.

ANNEX 6

KEY GUIDELINES FOR NATIONAL PUBLIC SECTOR AGENCIES IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

#	Policy/Strategic Support Area	Detail
1	Integrated Coastal Zone Management Policy Framework	• Development of a coordinated cross-sector approach to establish a comprehensive Integrated Coastal Zone Management Policy Framework that integrates disaster risk management and climate change adaptation into coastal and marine policies. This should clarify institutional roles and responsibilities, reducing overlap and confusion. • Develop a Comprehensive Regulatory Framework: Establish a clear, comprehensive framework Enhance Data Integration and Accessibility: Invest in modern, digital systems for monitoring coastal and marine resources, and ensure the availability of updated, integrated data and risk analyses. This will support more effective policy design and decision-making. • Prioritize Investment in Coastal Management: that stimulates the identification of adaptation opportunities and investments for coastal protection, addressing the current deficit in financing for sustainable management of coastal zones including coral reef restoration. Identify and prioritize necessary investments and measures for managing coastal areas and mitigating risks, including infrastructure improvements and community-based adaptation strategies.
2	Ley Sectorial de Conservación Costera y Marina	• Enhance Interagency Coordination: Establish a central coordinating body to oversee the implementation of the law, ensuring clarity and consistency across various institutional mandates. This body should work to integrate efforts and streamline responsibilities to prevent overlap and inefficiencies in the management of coral conservation projects. • Prioritize and Expedite Legislative Approval: Increase the prioritization of coral conservation within the national agenda by actively promoting the economic, environmental, and social benefits of the proposed law. Employ strategic communication and advocacy to expedite the legislative process, emphasizing the urgent need for updated and robust legal frameworks to protect coastal and marine ecosystems. • Technology and Education: Develop and invest in an updated, integrated digital monitoring system that supports real-time data collection and analysis for informed decision-making in coral conservation. Simultaneously, encourage the creation of specialized educational programs and training in marine sciences to build local capacity for the effective design, supervision, and management of coral reef restoration and conservation initiatives.
3	Technical assistance, M&E System for Coral Reef Restoration	• Enhance Technical Expertise: Prioritize the development of human capital through targeted education and training initiatives aimed at cultivating a pool of proficient marine scientists and coastal engineers. This workforce will be instrumental in the sophisticated design, meticulous implementation, and comprehensive management of coral reef restoration projects. • Boost Financial and Operational Support: Increase funding and logistical resources for the Ministry of Environment. This augmentation is crucial not only for expanding the reach and impact of coral reef restoration projects but also for establishing robust systems for ongoing monitoring and adaptive management of coral ecosystems.
4	Partnerships & Inter-Institutional Collaboration	• Establish and Strengthen Partnerships: Formulate and maintain robust, formal collaborations with public agencies, NGOs, and private sector stakeholders involved in coastal and marine management. These partnerships should focus specifically on coral reef restoration to ensure unified and effective action. • Integrate and Align Restoration Efforts: Work collaboratively across all sectors to promote, support, and expand coral reef restoration activities. This includes harmonizing goals and methodologies to streamline efforts and maximize impact. • Capitalize on Existing Networks: Enhance partnerships by leveraging existing relationships with private sector tourism entities and businesses engaged in coral reef restoration. Focus on joint promotion, capacity building, and training initiatives to bolster collective expertise and resources. • Lead Policy and Funding Initiatives: Take a leadership role in organizing and engaging stakeholders in national and regional policy dialogues and working groups. These should aim to address key issues in coral reef restoration, including policy formulation, funding mechanisms, and the dissemination of best practices. • Secure and Diversify Funding: Collaborate with partners, especially within the tourism sector, to identify and secure funding opportunities that support the scaling and sustainability of coral reef restoration projects.
5	Awarding	• Recognise business and NGO leadership in Coral Reef Restoration

ANNEX 7

POLICY & STRATEGY GUIDELINES FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES & PRIVATE SECTOR AGENCIES

#	Policy/ Strategy Area	Detail
1	Sustainability Leadership	● Continuously uphold and promote sustainability as a core business policy by actively supporting ecosystem conservation efforts, including coral reef restoration, to enhance natural capital and reinforce the company's commitment to environmental stewardship.
2	ESG Standards	● Integrate ESG Standards into Business Operations: Tourism businesses should adopt and integrate ESG standards that specifically address marine conservation. This includes developing policies that minimize environmental impact and promote sustainable practices such as waste reduction, water conservation, and responsible interactions with marine life. Businesses should also engage in financing restoration projects, such as coral planting and support for marine protected areas.
3	Advocacy	● Engage More Actively with Industry Associations: Increase involvement with the Hotel Business Association ASONAHORES and the Sustainability Committee. Use these platforms to advocate for stronger environmental policies and practices within the industry, ensuring that sustainability is at the forefront of all tourism-related activities. ● Participate in Policy Dialogue: Take a proactive role in policy discussions, particularly those related to the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Policy Framework and Ley Sectorial de Conservación Costera y Marina. By participating in these dialogues, businesses can help shape policies that are conducive to sustainable tourism and ecosystem conservation. ● Promote and Support Sustainable Practices: Encourage the adoption of sustainable practices through advocacy and by setting examples in their operations. This includes supporting regulations that protect natural habitats, reduce pollution, conserve resources, and ensure that tourism benefits the local economy and ecosystems. ● Recognise business leadership in conservation and sustainability including coral reef restoration
4	Partnership	● Form Strategic Alliances with Conservation Organizations: Collaborate with environmental nonprofits and conservation groups including the Dominican reef network and the Dominican Consortium for Coastal Restoration that have a proven track record in marine and coral ecosystem conservation. These partnerships can provide technical expertise, additional resources, and enhanced credibility for conservation initiatives. Engaging in cause-related marketing and commercial co-ventures can also help spread the word about efforts and impact, attracting more support and visibility. ● Engage in Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives: Participate in forums and collaborations that bring together various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and other businesses. This approach helps in aligning goals, sharing best practices, and pooling resources for larger impact projects. It also ensures that efforts are not duplicated and that the strategies employed are comprehensive and cover multiple aspects of ecosystem conservation. ● Support Community-Based Conservation Efforts: Work closely with local communities and support initiatives that involve them directly in conservation activities. This could include training programs, sustainable tourism practices, and community-led monitoring and restoration projects. Engaging local communities not only helps in building local capacity but also ensures the sustainability of conservation efforts through enhanced stewardship and ownership.
5	Coral Reef Restoration Networks	● Join the Dominican Consortium for Coastal Restoration and the Dominican Reef Network as a strategic means to build synergies for coral reef restoration and for easy facilitation of coral reef restoration activities within the regulatory requirements of government
6	Funding Opportunities	● Establish a Conservation Trust: Develop a conservation trust specifically aimed at funding coral reef restoration and other marine conservation efforts. This trust can be structured to manage and disburse funds transparently, ensuring that investments are directed towards impactful and sustainable projects. Engaging a professional board and fund manager can help in maintaining accountability and effectiveness. ● Issue Corporate Blue Bonds: Explore the possibility of issuing corporate blue bonds, which are debt instruments that raise capital for marine and ocean-based projects with environmental benefits. These bonds can attract investors interested in sustainable development and provide a steady stream of funding for long-term conservation projects. ● Leverage Carbon Credit Markets: Participate in carbon markets to finance conservation efforts. By quantifying the carbon sequestration capabilities of restored or protected marine ecosystems, businesses can generate carbon credits. These credits can then be sold on compliance or voluntary carbon markets, providing an additional revenue stream that supports ongoing conservation activities. ● Engage with Insurance and Reinsurance Companies: Collaborate with insurance and reinsurance companies to develop nature-positive insurance products. These products can provide funding for restoration and conservation through premiums and potentially pay out in restoration efforts following environmental damage, thus securing financial support for proactive and reactive conservation measures.

ANNEX 8

POLICY & STRATEGY GUIDELINES FOR NGOs & FUNDING/DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

#	Policy/ Strategy Area	Detail
1	Technical Leadership	• Continue to strengthen leadership in coral reef restoration by forming strategic partnerships with local businesses, government bodies, international conservation organizations, and academia to facilitate resource sharing, drive innovative restoration techniques, and influence policy-making for sustainable marine practices in the Dominican Republic.
2	Advocacy	• Sensitize and advise Governments, the private sector and other stakeholders on the benefits and status of coral reefs and the policy, action plan and strategic approaches best suited to the restoration and continued health of the reef ecosystem across the country • Participate in Policy Dialogue: Take a proactive role in organising and leading policy discussions, particularly those related to the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Policy Framework and Ley Sectorial de Conservación Costera y Marina. By participating in these dialogues, NGOs can help shape policies that are conducive to coral reef restoration. • Conservation Awards: Work closely with public and private sectors to recognise stakeholder leadership in Coral Reef Restoration
3	Capacity Development & Training	• Build Multi-Sector Capacity on Coral Reef Restoration: NGOs should lead initiatives to train and build capacity among various stakeholders, including government agencies, local businesses, and other NGOs. This could involve organizing workshops, seminars, and hands-on training sessions that cover the technical aspects of coral reef restoration. By sharing knowledge and skills with a broad range of participants, NGOs can foster a collaborative approach to reef conservation, ensuring that all parties are equipped with the latest methodologies and technologies for effective restoration. • Continuously Update and Disseminate Best Practices: It is essential for NGOs to stay at the forefront of coral reef restoration by continuously updating their knowledge and practices based on the latest scientific research and field data. This involves not only adapting their own practices but also actively contributing to the broader community's understanding by updating guidelines and best practices. NGOs can achieve this by participating in international coral reef conferences, publishing in scientific journals, and creating open-access resources that disseminate updated restoration techniques and case studies to the global conservation community.
4	Partnership	• Strengthen your involvement in the Dominican Consortium for Coastal Restoration and the Dominican Reef Network as a strategic means to build synergies for coral reef restoration and for easy facilitation of coral reef restoration activities within the regulatory requirements of government.
5	Funding Opportunities	• Develop a Comprehensive Conservation Trust: Establish a Conservation Trust that includes partnerships with both private sector entities and public sector agencies. This trust should aim to pool resources from various stakeholders, including tourism businesses benefiting from healthy reefs, local and national government bodies, and international donors. The trust can serve as a robust financial mechanism to manage and allocate funds specifically for coral reef restoration and conservation projects. • Explore Multiple Financing Avenues: Actively pursue diverse funding sources such as bilateral and multilateral aid, grants from international conservation agencies, and innovative financing mechanisms like blue bonds and carbon credits. These funds can be instrumental in scaling up coral reef restoration efforts and ensuring their sustainability. Engaging with financial advisors or consultants who specialize in environmental finance can help identify and secure these opportunities effectively.

END OF POLICY ANALYSIS DOCUMENT