



# COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS AND YOUR BUSINESS



## Creating Win-Wins for Business and Nature

Many businesses, large and small, are already reaping the benefits of strategic investments in coastal sustainability.

### Fisheries and Aquaculture

Intensive shrimp farming, which has converted large areas of mangrove forests into shrimp farms, has damaged many coastal areas. While the business can be lucrative, entire harvests may be wiped out when prices fall or disease hits. The integrity of coastal ecosystems also suffers, leaving local communities more vulnerable to natural disasters.

In Viet Nam, MFF is working with major seafood export companies to support shrimp farming models which maintain forest cover around shrimp ponds. The result: while yields have dropped, household incomes have doubled, thanks to diversified production, lower input costs and reduced risk of crop failure. Seafood companies also now have access to reliable supplies of shrimp which can be certified as organic, meeting growing market demand for sustainable products.

*We have a responsibility to protect the forest which also means protecting ourselves as we ensure sufficient supplies of shrimp for our factory and to meet global market demand.*

**Le Van Quang, CEO, Minh Phu Seafood, Viet Nam**

### Coastal Tourism

The rapid development of coastal tourism in many parts of Asia has brought unforeseen consequences for ecosystems and communities. Healthy mangrove ecosystems are often cleared to make way for beaches, and coral reefs are destroyed by pollution and careless tourists. But at the same time, coastal tourism is heavily dependent on the maintenance of coastal ecosystems. Many forward thinking resort companies and tour operators are investing in both local communities and natural systems as a way of protecting their own assets and the future viability of their businesses.

In Thailand, MFF works with Marriott Hotels and Resorts in a national partnership which works to restore local mangrove forests and to support

communities through procurement practices that give preference to sustainable seafood and local products.

At a regional level in the Maldives and Viet Nam, MFF has supported the implementation of Green Fins, the only globally recognized standard for sustainable snorkeling and diving. Green Fins provides a comprehensive management approach to guide business owners, and its standards are now being incorporated into national policy in some countries.

*In the long run, the efforts we are pursuing here are good for the communities, good for tourism, good for Thailand and that's good for our business in hotels.*  
**Don Cleary, Asia Pacific COO, Marriott International**

### Sustainable Community Enterprise Development

In order to reduce pressure on over-exploited Sri Lankan fisheries and to provide alternative income for local households, with a focus on women, MFF issued a grant to the Marine and Coastal Resources Conservation Foundation to establish an aloe vera cultivation project and negotiate a supply contract with a cosmetics company. The growers were also able to establish an aloe vera drinks business from excess production. Overall household income increased 26% and the project is being replicated in other areas.

### Become a Partner in Coastal Conservation

The protection of marine and coastal ecosystems reduces risk and increases value for your business and investments. Businesses have much to gain when they are engaged as productive partners in finding solutions to the challenges being faced by people in coastal communities. To find out how you can be part of this initiative, contact:

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Mangroves for the Future (MFF) is a unique partner-led initiative to promote investment in coastal ecosystem conservation for sustainable development



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## The Business Case for Coastal Conservation

The coastal zones of Asia, home to some of the world’s most productive natural habitats, are thriving hubs of economic activity. These coasts contribute over 40% of the world’s fisheries production, host most of the world’s busiest sea ports and are important centres of tourism.

This development has brought benefits to many. But increasing pressures from overfishing, unplanned development, pollution and climate change are putting the health of coastal ecosystems, and the communities that depend on them, at risk.

Companies in key sectors – from fisheries and aquaculture to coastal tourism, shipping and coastal mining – increasingly understand that a focus on sustainability must become a core part of their business thinking, and will be critical to their long-term success.

Intact and healthy coastal ecosystems are not only valued because of their natural beauty. They also provide food and nutrition, livelihoods, protection and other essential goods and services to people.

- Mangroves and other types of coastal vegetation provide an effective buffer against tidal waves and storm surges, protecting communities from the worst effects of natural disasters.
- Seagrass beds protect coasts from erosion, trap sediments, filter pollution from estuaries, and provide breeding grounds for fish, shrimp and crabs.
- Coral reefs have high value for tourism, and are home to the most diverse ecosystems on the planet, providing food and shelter to countless marine species.
- Mangroves are among the richest carbon stores on the planet. Protecting mangrove forests plays an important part in climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

## Risks and Opportunities

All human societies and economies are ultimately reliant on nature and its services for long-term health and sustainability. As ecosystems are degraded, this creates problems not just for biodiversity and nature, but for your business as well. In an increasingly connected world, these risks are coming to light more rapidly than ever before:

- Disruptions to operations and production capacity caused by extreme weather events;
- Competition for resources;
- Changes to markets; and
- Increased levels of public scrutiny and government regulation.

But change can also offer opportunity, and companies that are quick to assess and develop new opportunities for sustainability will ultimately be more profitable in the long term. Companies can balance environmental, social and economic performance while delivering superior returns to investors by:

- Introducing new ‘green’ businesses, products or services that help society mitigate or adapt to the impacts of climate change and other threats;
- Enhancing reputation and brand through forward-thinking sustainability strategies; and
- Improving social license to operate from local communities.

- In Asia Pacific alone, over 40% of coral reefs and mangroves have disappeared over the last 40 years
- More than 300 million urban dwellers in Asia Pacific are at risk from coastal flooding
- The industries most likely to be hit hard by climate change – agriculture, fisheries and forestry – directly employ 60% of the region’s population
- Asia Pacific is home to seven of the 10 countries most likely to be adversely affected by climate change

## Mangroves for the Future and Your Business

Mangroves for the Future works to protect and restore the health of Asia’s coastal ecosystems. The goal is to build resilience in ecosystem-dependent coastal communities by promoting ‘nature-based solutions’ which recognize that well-managed, healthy and diverse ecosystems can contribute significantly to human resilience and well-being.

MFF has adopted mangroves as its flagship ecosystem in recognition of the important role that mangrove forests play in reducing the impact of coastal disasters. But the initiative embraces all coastal ecosystems, including coral reefs, estuaries, lagoons, wetlands, beaches and seagrass beds.

MFF operates in 11 countries throughout the region and supports the development of resilient communities by facilitating grants which fund community projects, many of which promote the development of small-scale community enterprise. The private sector, whose business relies on nature’s goods and services, is an important stakeholder in many of the areas where MFF operates.

MFF works to actively harness the resources, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of the private sector in the interest of protecting coastal ecosystems. This may involve:

- Helping key industries to assess and mitigate their impacts;
- Influencing supply chains and helping companies to source sustainable products;
- Supporting connections to local communities and optimizing return on CSR investment;
- Exploring new green products and services which can benefit coastal communities; and
- Working to change standards and business practices.

A dedicated small grant fund also encourages co-financing by private sector of community activities with a one-to-one match from MFF funding.