



# COLIBRI

COMMUNITY LIVELIHOOD  
& BIODIVERSITY RECOVERY

COLIBRI, a project funded by the European Union, seeks to safeguard fragile forest and coral reef ecosystems in Sri Lanka by promoting the sustainable use of natural resources and improving livelihoods through evidence-based research, community mobilisation, and policy advocacy.



**ENVIRONMENT FOUNDATION  
(GUARANTEE) LIMITED**

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## Fun Facts

### Bar Reef Marine Sanctuary

- Situated in the North Western Province in Sri Lanka
- One of the largest Marine Protected Areas in Sri Lanka
- Declared a marine sanctuary in 1992
- Size: 30, 670 ha / 306.7 square kilometers
- Consists of coral reefs, seagrass beds, muddy and sandy beaches
- Interesting animals found : marine turtles, dugong, dolphins, whales and corals
- Maintained by the Department of Wildlife Conservation
- An important fishing ground
- Tourist activities: kite surfing , snorkeling, scuba diving , whale and dolphin watching



I am the Bar Reef. In 1992, a large chunk of me was declared a protected sanctuary for you.

Here, the water is crystal clear, the temperature is just right and the depth is perfect for a tiny animal called polyp to build their home. Polyps are like jelly babies and to protect their bodies, they build calcium castles, all together forming the coral reef and for thousands of years, the water has remained just right.

Fish that are as colourful as your colouring pencils, call this place their home. On a sunny day, I see a turtle that has traveled thousands of kilometres, stopping by the corals and taking a nap, while fish and shrimps are busy cleaning his shell. That is the kinship that hide beneath the waves.

I hear the blue whales sing and dolphins spin. I see the birds, ending their long winter journey over my sun lit surface. I am the Bar Reef, where there is nourishing mud and seagrass grow aplenty. It is here, you meet dugong, grazing the seagrass.

I have been watching your forefathers, like you, first wetting the toes, then learning to swim, then riding over my waves. How beautiful were those catamarans! Then, when the weather is perfect, some of them came. But not to fish, just to see me! They dived, mesmerized by my beauty!

But then, things started changing. I was not prepared for oars being abandoned, motorized boats, nets, oxygen tanks, spears and dynamites. They destroy my bounties as if there is no tomorrow. It hurts me, I know it hurts you too. Despite this, I show resilience. My lesson for you too, be resilient! I feel my waters changing. I see strange things like tiny fragments of plastic that don't seem to decay. They are outnumbering the fish.

Also, I have no power to stop my water from heating up when this event called "El Nino" happens. Many times it has happened and my corals are dying. Reefs that took thousands of years to build, are crumbling to rubble before me. I am the Bar Reef, so sad and concerned. I await you as you are my hope!

Can we set aside areas to heal me, so I can bounce back? Can we use the correct fishing gear so that you can continue to fish? Can we make every attempt to say no to things that takes a long period to decay, so that I am not polluted? Can we dive and watch marine animals without disturbing and touching them, so that they can be happy while you are too?

I am the Bar Reef. I'd like to wet the feet of many more children, I want to stay healthy and I want to make sure I have the beauty to surprise you the day you dive!  
So, can we love each other?