

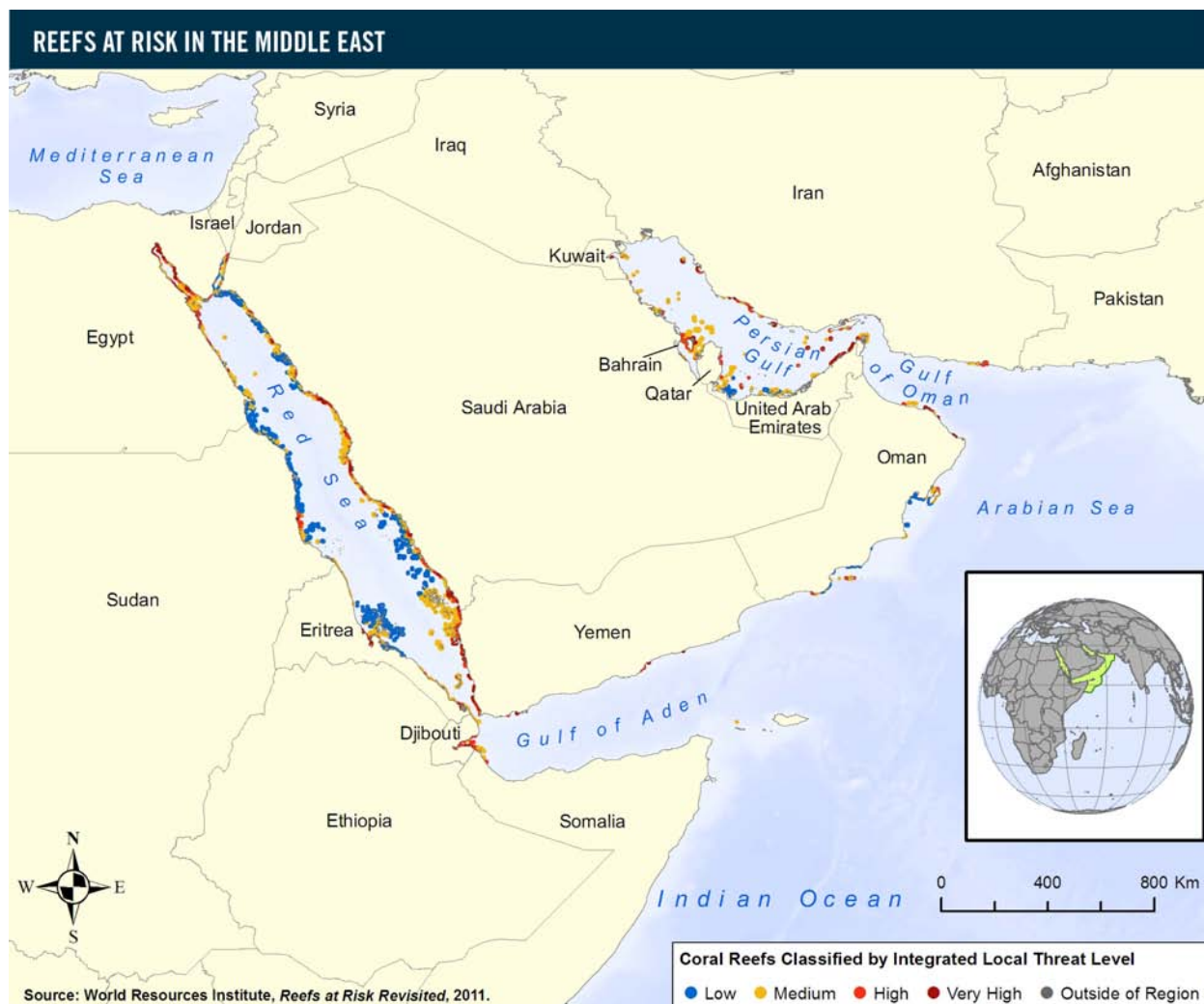
**WRI FACT SHEET**

# Reefs at Risk Revisited: Middle East

The World Resources Institute (WRI) spearheaded a broad collaboration of leading conservation organizations and research institutes to conduct a global, map-based analysis of threats to the world's coral reefs called Reefs at Risk Revisited. This report provides detailed examination of human pressures on coral reefs, implications for reef condition, and projections of associated socioeconomic impacts in coastal communities.

**REGIONAL KEY POINTS**

- The Middle East is home to about 6 percent of the world's coral reefs (14,000 sq km).
- About 19 million people in this region live on the coast within 30 km of a coral reef.
- Nearly two-thirds of reefs here are at risk from local threats (coastal development, marine-based pollution and damage, overfishing and destructive fishing, or watershed-based pollution).
- Only 12 percent of the region's reefs are within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).



## REGION

The Middle East has about six percent of the world's coral reefs (about 14,000 sq km), almost all of which are found on the continental margins in fringing, barrier, and platform reefs. The Red Sea and Gulf of Aden have narrow shelves, with deep waters nearby. In contrast, the Persian Gulf is shallow, averaging only 35 meters deep. This Gulf only formed as sea levels rose after the last ice age. It is subject to wide temperature fluctuations and high salinities, linked to high evaporation and the lack of freshwater input.

## PEOPLE

The Middle East has some of the largest tracts of sparsely inhabited continental coastlines in the world, but also has some of the fastest growing populations, enhanced by immigration and tourism. Coastal development, particularly in some of the very wealthy economies, is bringing profound changes in a few areas such as the southern Persian Gulf and the Red Sea port of Jeddah. In these places, extensive areas of shallow water have been filled in for industrial, urban and tourism infrastructure, resulting in direct impacts (e.g., loss of habitat and ecosystems) as well as indirect impacts (e.g., alteration to sediment transport and current patterns) over wide areas.

## STATUS

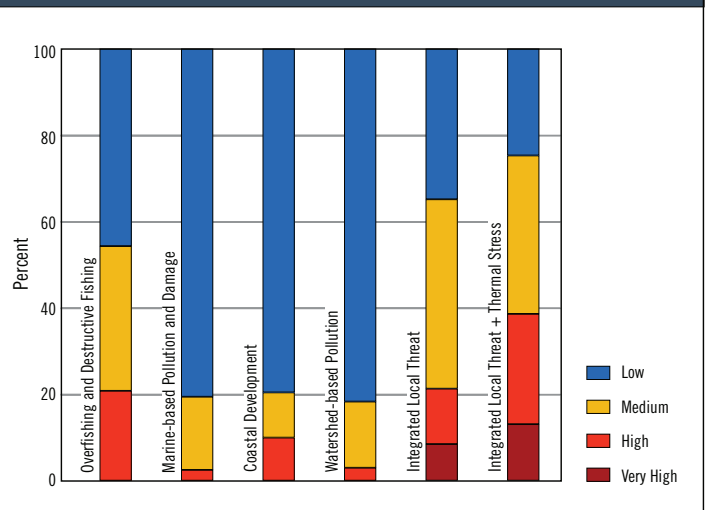
Nearly two-thirds of the reefs in the region are at risk from local threats. Overfishing dominates the local threat statistics, affecting 55 percent of reefs. Thermal stress and ocean acidification are projected to increase threat levels to nearly 90 percent by 2030, while by 2050 these climate change impacts, combined with current local impacts, will push all reefs to threatened status. The greatest pressure is in the Persian Gulf where more than 85 percent of reefs are considered threatened, while the figure for the Red Sea is just over 60 percent. Areas of low threat in the central western Red Sea and along the northern Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia may be some of the most extensive areas of reefs on the continental margin reefs under low threat anywhere outside of Australia.

## REEF CONSERVATION

Only 12 percent of the region's reefs are within protected areas, many of which are in Egypt. Eleven percent of these reefs are effectively or partially protected. About 50 percent of Egypt's reefs are inside MPAs and all of these MPAs are considered at least partially effective. These protected areas have likely played an important role in maintaining healthy reefs and reducing the impact of the burgeoning tourism industry over extensive areas of the Egyptian coast.

FOR MORE, SEE PAGES 48-50 OF *REEFS AT RISK REVISITED*

## Reefs at Risk in the Middle East



## ABOUT WRI

The World Resources Institute is a global environmental think tank that goes beyond research to put ideas into action. We work with governments, companies, and civil society to build solutions to urgent environmental challenges. For more information on our coral reefs work, visit [www.wri.org/reefs](http://www.wri.org/reefs).

## ABOUT REEFS AT RISK REVISITED

The groundbreaking report, *Reefs at Risk Revisited*, is the most detailed assessment of threats to coral reefs ever undertaken. The report was led by the World Resources Institute, along with the Nature Conservancy, the WorldFish Center, ICRAN, UNEP-WCMC, and GCRMN.

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