

# Gulf of Honduras Programme

## Project Characteristics:

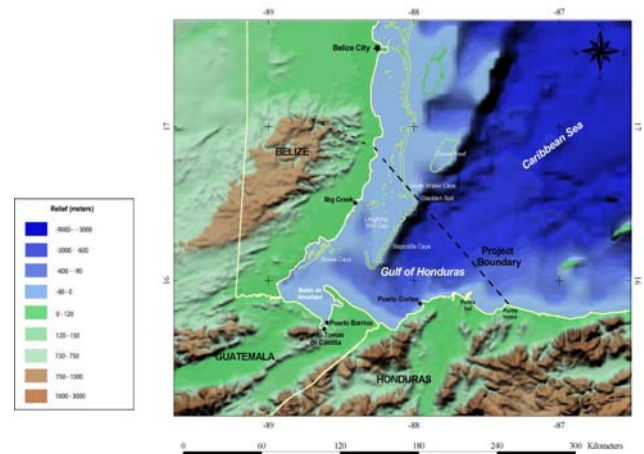
- *Completing Preliminary Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis*
- *Biodiversity Assessment*
- *Coastal Zone Management*
- *Developing Project Brief*
- *Working with Regional Stakeholders' Committee*

Central America's Gulf of Honduras faces serious environmental threats, many of them transboundary in nature, from increasing anthropogenic activities including maritime transport as well as land-based activities. The Gulf encompasses exclusive economic zones of Belize, Guatemala and Honduras and is a critical resource for all three countries, providing fisheries resources, tourist opportunities and important shipping routes.

The Gulf of Honduras is a highly productive region due to rivers transporting nutrients from the land, the nutrients from the open sea, and the close proximity of the swampy mangrove areas, the seagrass beds and the coral reefs. The southern part of the Meso-American Barrier Reef System, the second largest reef system in the world, borders the Gulf of Honduras. The Gulf of Honduras is rich in marine biodiversity, including tropical coastal fisheries, reptiles including several endangered turtle species, and marine mammals. The Gulf serves as habitat for the Caribbean's largest population of West Indian manatee.

The sensitive marine and coastal habitats are being degraded by ongoing port activities, shipping activities and other land-based activities. Additionally, the heavy volume of ships traveling through the region, many of which carry hazardous substances, pose a significant threat to the region's ecosystem as a navigational accident could severely affect critical habitats in the Gulf.

Recognizing the need to protect the region's critical resources from port, marine and land-based activities, the three countries worked with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to develop the Gulf of



Honduras programme. The IDB contracted The Woods Hole Group with Abt Associates to complete the tasks included in the Global Environment Facility Project Development Facility (PDF-B) phase of the GOH project. This included undertaking missions to the region to investigate further the region's needs and goals, and to gain consensus on plans for moving forward with the project through working with the Regional Stakeholders' Committee.

As part of the GOH Project, consultants at the Woods Hole Group worked with academia, national leaders and the international donor agency IDB. The staff was able to draw upon the vast experience that Woods Hole Group had in developing Transboundary Diagnostic Analyses and Project Briefs in order to successfully and quickly complete the tasks. Throughout these early stages of the program, Woods Hole Group staff has assisted the region in developing specific intervention plans for halting and mitigating the effects of marine and land-based sources of pollution.