

# Asociación Mar a Mar

*Center for Biodiversity and Environmental Education*

## Mar a Mar Mission

*Mar a Mar* has been a registered Costa Rican NGO/nonprofit organization since 2016. It resides and works in the nexus between *conservation, tourism, and rural community economic development.*

*Mar a Mar's* Mission is to alleviate poverty and help develop sustainable rural communities committed to conservation. The organization does this by creating and promoting a world-class long-distance hiking trail, *El Camino de Costa Rica*. *Mar a Mar* promotes *El Camino* domestically and internationally. Projects to upgrade trail infrastructure and cultivate sustainable enterprises along the route contribute to the well-being of families and communities. As the number of trekkers and hikers grows, *El Camino* becomes a development engine for the trail's poor communities bringing new resources, social infrastructure, and badly needed income.

Because *El Camino's* popularity depends heavily on a variety of natural and local culture attractions along its course, *Mar a Mar* and local communities devote special attention to conserving local flora and fauna, promoting reforestation, and showcasing local traditions. Where they exist, local development associations are empowered to define and implement such projects with *Mar a Mar* playing a guiding and supporting role.

Our overarching strategy and Objectives are based on three pillars.





## Center for Biodiversity and Environmental Education

Within the context of the third pillar, Mar a Mar hopes to create at the end of section 2 of El Camino de Costa Rica a Center for Biodiversity and Environmental Education.

We are at the very early stages of giving shape to a vision of creating a Center for Biodiversity and Environmental Education a type of *estación biológica* that provides

1. Facilities for education and training programs
2. Sites for small research teams to work and display results
3. A venue for innovators to showcase their ideas

The zone just outside of Costa Rica's Barbilla National Park at the end of Section 2 of El Camino de Costa Rica is in our view a prime location for such a center.

Mar a Mar seeks funds from foundations and individuals and writes grants to a variety of organizations. Relationships with international volunteer organizations have provided funds and volunteers for the development of projects.

For the Center of Biodiversity and Environmental Education we seek the support of the Organization for Tropical Studies [www.tropicalstudies.org](http://www.tropicalstudies.org), the Monteverde Institute [www.monteverde-institute.org](http://www.monteverde-institute.org) y Naturfreunde International [www.naturfreunde.at](http://www.naturfreunde.at)

We count with the support of ntag.partners the consultations with Dr. Claus Eppe [www.ntag-partners.eu](http://www.ntag-partners.eu). We have consulted with the University of Costa Rica, the SINAC, the Areas of Conservations and we will continue to seek the support of the communities contiguous to the National Park Barbillas whom we consider our principal partners in this venture.

In order to reach this goal we have already taken significant steps and have focussed our efforts in the communities near the National Park Barbilla including in the Nairi Awari indigenous Territory ensuring that initiatives are led by the community.

As of 2023 the initiative includes this achievements:

- 1) The construction of a Capacity building center that serves as a connectivity hub for the community.
- 2) **Development of a hiker's camp owned and operated Cabecar community who are the sole owners of the campground. It is designed for hikers but its expected to also provide lodging for visitors to the park and to students studying at the center. The camp has been built with the help of Developing World Connections [www.developingworld.org](http://www.developingworld.org) Funds are also being sought from a program of the German Embassy in San Jose, Costa Rica.**