



Marine Stewardship Council

Partnering for Sustainable Fisheries

A practical guide for working in partnerships to support Marine Stewardship Council certification for small-scale and developing world fisheries.



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Cover photography

First image: Sorting clams at the Vietnam Ben Tre clam hand-gathered fishery.

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Second image: Woman spear-fishing at the octopus fishery in Toliara, Madagascar.

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1. Background

1.1. Purpose

This guide has been designed for individuals, groups and organisations interested in working in partnerships that assist developing country fisheries to achieve Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. As constraints to certification can often not be addressed by fisheries in isolation, partnerships have an important role to play in supporting improvements in fisheries and preparing them for working through the assessment process. In order to ensure a practical focus the guide has been informed by a group of individuals with direct experience of working in partnerships that promote sustainable fishing. Alongside a set of checklists and tips for the development of partnering activities that support MSC certification and fishery improvements, information is included on:

- The benefits and challenges of working in partnership.
- The roles that can be assumed by different stakeholders in partnerships.
- Activities that can be undertaken in partnership to support improvements and fishery assessment.
- Steps and skills for building and managing successful partnerships aimed at achieving MSC certification.

What is a partnership?

A partnership is a relationship in which the resources and competencies of different stakeholders are shared in order to achieve a common goal in a more effective and sustainable manner than when each operates separately.

The framework provided here is not intended as a rigid template and should be adapted flexibly to the distinct circumstances and needs of specific fisheries and their partners. Although partnerships usually work through the stages outlined, and are likely to face similar challenges, their activities should be tailor-made for the particular context in which they operate.

1.2. The Marine Stewardship Council certification programme

The MSC is an independent, global, non-profit organisation that promotes environmentally responsible fishing practices through the use of an ecolabelling and certification programme that enables consumers to make informed purchasing decisions. The MSC certification programme is open to all fisheries regardless of size, scale, location and intensity. Fisheries apply on a voluntary basis to be assessed against the MSC standard by independent certification bodies. The MSC standard or Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing is based on the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and was developed through extensive international consultation. It consists of three principles:

“The MSC’s approach to sustainable fisheries is a unique, win-win concept which offers an innovative means to help government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the fishing industry, seafood businesses and the general public to work together to meet national and international targets for sustainable fisheries.”

Protecting fisheries, improving livelihoods, MSC Developing World Fisheries Programme

1. Sustainable fish stocks – The fishing activity must be at a level which is sustainable for the fish population. Any certified fishery must operate so that fishing can continue indefinitely and does not overexploit the resources.

2. Minimising environmental impact – Fishing operations should be managed to maintain the structure, productivity, function and diversity of the ecosystem on which the fishery depends.

3. Effective management – The fishery must meet all local, national and international laws and must have a management system in place to respond to changing circumstances and maintain sustainability.

Certification to the MSC standard is a multi-step process which is carried out by an independent accredited certifier. The assessment process involves four distinct phases: pre-assessment; preparation for assessment; full assessment and post-assessment.

1. Background *continued*

1.3. Addressing constraints to certification for small-scale and developing world fisheries through partnerships

Although the MSC promotes equal access to its programme there are sometimes constraints to certification. This is particularly the case in developing countries where issues such as limited awareness of how ecolabelling and certification work, institutional weaknesses, poor capacity and limited resources may make certification more difficult. In some instances fisheries are identified as not being immediately certifiable, either through a pre-assessment or through a rapid gap analysis that points to divergences between the requirements of the MSC standard for sustainable fishing and the fisheries' current performance. An increasing number of such fisheries have embarked upon an improvement phase in which stakeholders in the fishery work to identify suitable measures to address the gaps identified. These measures are implemented over time and the fisheries later proceed to reengage with the MSC assessment process in order to become certified to the MSC standard.

This approach is increasingly effective in helping fisheries make improvements that are needed for them to become more sustainable. In order to support developing world fisheries to make necessary improvements and work towards certification, the development of partnerships between fisheries and other relevant stakeholders is a useful tool. Partnerships can also complement other MSC initiatives that support certification in developing countries such as outreach work, support for small-scale and data-deficient fisheries, and assistance with locating funding for assessment costs.



Ashtamudi Short Neck Clam Fishery, India completed MSC pre-assessment in 2010.

“Our Sole, Our Wealth, Our Lives”: This is the vision of the Gambian Sole Fishery Co-management Plan, and culmination of two years work of the Ba Nafaa project which aims to help the fishery achieve MSC certification.

Partnership in action



The Gambia sole fishery

A number of partnership initiatives work with the Gambia sole fishery to promote sustainable fishing:

- The Atlantic Seafood Company (Gambia) Ltd. has worked in partnership with the Gambian Fisheries Department and small-scale fisheries to ensure that sole fish are caught in a responsible manner. The Atlantic seafood company is providing data that it has collected on fish size distribution over a number of years to the fishery department to assist with assessment of stocks. As many as 1500 fishers depend upon the catching and processing of sole products processed by the company which are exported to Europe and South Africa.
- The Ba Nafaa (Benefits of the Sea) project is a five-year partnership between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) West Africa; the Coastal Resources Center, University of Rhode Island (URI); the World Wide Fund (WWF) West Africa Regional Office; and the Gambian Department of Fisheries (DoFish). The partnership works to strengthen capacity to conduct fisheries stock assessments and implement community-based management plans as well as promote gender equity. Assistance is provided to the Gambia Artisanal Fisheries Development Agency (GAMFIDA), the National Association of Artisanal Fisheries Operators (NAAFO) and DoFish to meet the eligibility criteria for MSC certification of the sole fishery. This currently involves addressing specific areas identified for improvement such as developing harvest strategy; understanding of stock status; improved integration of information collation and strategic research; and better monitoring, control and surveillance.
- The MSC has also worked with the sole fishery to introduce the concept of certification to stakeholders and organise training events to improve understanding of how the certification process works and how stakeholders can engage in the process.
- West African Trade Hub (WATH) is working to identify further international markets willing to purchase certified product if the fishery becomes certified.

“All stakeholders are keen to have a common stand on wealth maximisation while maintaining healthy stocks of sole fish. The Gambia artisanal fisheries development agency (GAMFIDA), the umbrella organisation for artisanal fisheries organisations, and the fish processing establishment, together with the fisheries authorities have been able to reconcile and agree on sustenance and equity in the use of the resource.”

Gambian Department of Fisheries Representative

2. Why partnership?

2.1. The general benefits of working in partnership

The MSC assessment process and the improvement phase which may be needed before embarking upon assessment rely upon the collaboration of a diverse range of stakeholders. These include: government management agencies, environmental / conservation organisations, community and public interest groups, other fishers / fishing sectors, industry groups, retailers and the commercial / post harvest sector, as well as scientists and researchers, international agencies and funders. The different resources provided by these players include funds, knowledge, skills and experience which, when pooled, can be used to support activities that support fishery improvements. The relationships that are built through working in partnership can also play a valuable role in supporting certification and the promotion of sustainable fisheries.

“Our initial target was to achieve a market premium because of MSC certification, but the real gain has been an intangible one – power to lobby the authorities for a better, fairer organisation of our community.”

Mario Ramade, Senior Biologist working with Federation of Fishing Industry Cooperatives in Mexico quoted in ‘Net benefits, The first ten years of MSC certified sustainable fisheries’

Partnerships that assist developing country fisheries to make improvements and work towards MSC certification offer a number of important benefits. These include:

- **Improved focus** – The needs and priorities of developing country fisheries can be more easily identified and targeted approaches designed to address them.
- **Better coordination** – Efforts that support sustainable fishing are better synchronised and duplication is minimised.
- **Access to resources** – A pool of both financial and in-kind resources such as experience, skills, knowledge and networks can be drawn upon to support fishery improvements and certification.
- **Capacity-building opportunities** – Institutional support can be provided to fisheries so that their skills and capacities are strengthened.
- **Empowerment** – The profile of both fisheries and their partners can be raised.
- **Sustainability** – Partnerships can assist connections that promote long-term positive change and build a deeper shared understanding of the value of sustainable fishing.

It is also worth highlighting that many partnership benefits are unexpected and may emerge during or after the process of working together.

The following set of tables highlight potential benefits and roles of different stakeholder groups involved in a partnership that involves supporting a fishery in a path towards MSC certification.

“Partnership ensures that everyone contributes their efforts to improving fisheries.”

**Senior Fishery Officer,
Marine Programme
Officer, International
Conservation
Organisation**

Fishing community

Potential benefits from a partnership

- Better knowledge about the fishery.
- Long term business view.
- Goal oriented strategic framework for improved management.
- Certified supply that gives new market opportunities and potential for better prices.
- Attraction of investment.
- Access to funds / credit (for certification and other activities).
- Institutional support and opportunities for building capacity.
- Social license to operate.
- Access to policy making bodies lobbying power.

Potential roles in a partnership

- Implementer of improvement measures and provider of:
 - Information on local context, fishing methods.
 - Assistance in identification of funding and skill gaps.
 - Access to other fisheries and wider community.

“Partnerships make it simpler to identify the parties who are relevant to certification and who can make it work. It is also easier to turn everyone around at the same time and convince them of the advantage of MSC certification.”

**Manager, Fish
Processing and
Export Company,
Gambia**

Commercial organisations (seafood retailers, exporters, fishing industry)

Potential benefits from a partnership

- Certified supply.
- Social license to operate.
- Alignment with corporate social responsibility policies.
- Innovation in product development.
- Increased sales through customer appeal.
- New markets leads & opportunities.
- Improved supply chain relationships.

Potential roles in a partnership

- Provide finance for fishery improvement activities and assessment payment.
- Create awareness about the MSC process.
- Awareness and information about fish quality, contacts with retailers, other fisheries, etc.
- Information on market trends, product sourcing etc.
- Transport, communication, meeting and training venues.
- Products / items that assist fisheries to make improvements.
- Training and capacity building.
- Retailers can commit to sourcing from the fishery as an incentive to encourage engagement from the fishery.

2. Why partnership? *continued*

Government management agencies

Potential benefits from a partnership	Potential roles in a partnership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improved knowledge of natural resources – Independent verification of good management. – Goal oriented strategic framework for better management. – Long-term view. – Compliance with legislation. – Improved political support for sustainability. – Sharing responsibility with other organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide information on regulatory framework. – Transmission of knowledge and expertise for activities that assist fishery improvements and work towards certification. – Implementation of activities from action plans. – Transport, communication, meeting and training venues. – Contacts with international, national, regional and local government agencies, policy makers, academic & research institutions, media, etc. – Convening power and leverage. – Contextual information and data. – Links to other projects relating to sustainable fishing. – Scientific data.

“You can achieve a common stand on wealth maximisation while maintaining healthy fish stocks.”

**Senior Fishery Officer,
Gambia Department
of Fisheries**

Donor agencies

Donors / funders / Development bodies, foundations

Potential benefits from a partnership	Potential roles in a partnership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Awareness-raising about sustainable fishing. – Building of local capacities. – Models for replication. – Policy-level impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Funds, grants for project support and assessment payment. – Qualified / experienced personnel with appropriate knowledge bases for activities that can assist fishery improvements and certification. – Support / training for institutional capacity and skills-building. – Transport, communication, meeting and training venues. – Contacts with stakeholders including government agencies, NGOs, policy makers, wider networks etc. – Convening power and leverage. – Contextual information and experience of working in partnerships or joint projects relating to sustainable fishing / MSC certification. – Provide global context of Fishery Improvement Projects. – Support advocacy in international forums.

“Connections are made to processes, networks, markets structures and supply chains.”

**Project Officer,
Global Environmental
organisation**

“Working in partnership can strengthen capacities.”

Fisheries Programme Manager, International Conservation Organisation

“Partnership gives opportunities to teach by example and reinforce better behaviour. You are working with and for society, and interacting in practice for something worthwhile. You have more and you can move faster! You learn to feel confident about sharing who you are on an equal basis.”

Fisheries Biologist Public Research Organisation

Non-Governmental organisations (NGO's)

International, national and local not-for profit institutions

Potential benefits from a partnership

- Awareness-raising about environmental / conservation issues.
- Implementation of organisational mandates.
- Improved resource leverage.
- Ethical investment in fishing industry.
- Better long-term prospects and sustainability.
- Empowerment of stakeholders through capacity-building and skills provision.
- Building of social capital.
- Turning fisheries into good practice models.

Potential roles in a partnership

- Provide qualified / experienced personnel and consultants with appropriate knowledge bases for activities that can assist fishery improvements and certification through capacity building.
- Provide technical expertise to assess progress of the fishery improvement against the standard.
- Training in communication, advocacy, management, mediation, institutional capacity and skills-building.
- Transport, communication, meeting and training venues.
- Contacts with wider stakeholders.
- Convening power and leverage.
- Lobby for change in support of developing world fisheries.

Research community

Academic organisations, Scientific institutions, Research institutes

Potential benefits from a partnership

- Improved research opportunities.
- Access to possible funding channels.
- Context and focus for academic work.
- Real-life case studies.
- New collaboration channels working jointly with the fishery instead of being seen as a barrier to management.
- Research is used more profitably.
- Allows focus on priority area.

Potential roles in a partnership

- Provide in-depth knowledge base for activities that can assist fishery improvements and certification.
- Information, training and capacity-building support.
- Research and information for certification.
- Contacts with research bodies and institutions.
- Convening power and leverage.
- Contextual information.
- Scientific evidence of better management.

Community groups

Recreational, indigenous, and subsistence fishers

Potential benefits from a partnership

- Wider awareness about sustainable fishing / environmental and conservation issues.
- Funding for local economic / social projects.
- Capacity-building opportunities.
- Greater empowerment through involvement in decision-making.

Potential roles in a partnership

- Provide local knowledge and awareness.
- Provide contacts with community stakeholder groups etc.
- Convening power and leverage.

3. Partnership activities

A range of different activities can be developed in partnership to support fishery improvements and progress towards MSC certification. Some of the possible focus areas for activities are listed below. Using this list, potential partners can identify at what stage a particular fishery is, in relation to the assessment process and which activities might best be developed to enhance fishery improvements at that stage.

“By sharing human and financial resources and experience, partnership can increase the impact of an activity.”

Fisheries Programme Manager
International Conservation Organisation

Stages towards MSC certification		Possible partner activities
I	Fishery identification – involves identifying the fishery around which the partnership revolves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identification of candidate fishery to partner with based on market, ecological, social or other factors. – Review and as appropriate conduct rapid appraisal of the fishery.
II	Initiation stage – involves initial exploration of feasibility and opportunities for certification for the fishery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Develop fishery profile. – Identification of additional partners and stakeholders. – Familiarisation with MSC certification process. – Broad review and identification of capacity gaps / needs. – Mapping potential supply lines. – Raising funds. – Assist in building relationships with stakeholders. – Outreach / awareness-raising / advocacy work. – Action planning in order to prepare for assessment process. – identify and coordinate client group (fishers).
III	Pre-assessment / Gap analysis – involves identifying certification body and assessment of readiness of the fishery for certification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Requesting bids from certification bodies and making final selection. – Defining unit of certification. – Outreach / awareness-raising / advocacy work to other stakeholders. – Building relationships with stakeholders. – Providing information / data for pre-assessment. – Providing comments on draft pre-assessment. – Fundraising (for certification). – Fundraising for fisheries improvement. – Action planning for full assessment or fishery improvement phase.

Stages towards MSC certification		Possible partner activities
IV	Improvement phase – involves identifying gaps between fishery performance and MSC standard and implementing measures to address identified gaps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing an action plan to address gaps in fishery performance against the MSC standard. For further guidance on developing an action plan see the document <i>Fishery Improvement Action plan Guidance</i>. Refer to Section 9 for a link to this document. – Implementing the action plan (data collection and analysis, developing and implementing management plans, introducing regulations, etc). – Tracking and reporting on progress.
V	Preparation for full assessment – this involves communicating with colleagues, agencies and buyers and planning for full assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Training. – Building institutional capacity – Training / mentoring an individual / team to meet obligations as client. – Information management / record keeping. – Fundraising for certification. – Stakeholder management. – Budgeting and resource management.
VI	Full assessment – assessment to determine if the fishery meets the standard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Information management. – Working with the media. – Management planning. – Stakeholder management. – Managing interaction with the certification body. – Reviewing drafts of the full assessment. – Drafting press releases. – For further guidance on the full assessment process see the document <i>Get Certified! Fisheries</i>. Refer to Section 9 for a link to this document.
VII	Post certification – annual audit of the fishery and maximising benefits of certification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Meeting conditions and maintaining certification. – Market development. – Product sourcing. – Working with other fisheries to share information and learning. – Sustainable management.

4. Building successful partnerships

4.1. Understanding the challenges

Working in partnership is not easy. Combining the approaches, resources and styles of different partners requires a considerable investment of time and energy. As well as identifying the benefits it is important that all potential partners also have a clear understanding of the risks of working in partnership before they begin their collaboration. Risks will vary for each stakeholder and will be linked to the particular context in which they operate. However, they are usually likely to include, resource implications implementation challenges, poor enabling environment, managing expectations, weak accountability, and lack of engagement.

“Partnerships are fragile things. They need a lot of nurturing and encouragement.”

Meredith Lopuch, WWF-US Fisheries

4.2. Skills for working in partnership

Managing relationships across different sectors, organisations and groups requires particular skills. As well as technical, planning and project management skills, interpersonal and relationship-building abilities are also valuable for working in partnership. Key skills and roles needed in a partnership include advocacy, brokering, capacity building, communication, leadership, management, monitoring and evaluation, negotiation.

4.3. Partnership brokers

In most partnerships a crucial role is played by a partnership broker. A partnership broker is an individual or organisation that acts as an intermediary or facilitator, bringing partners together and assisting them to reach agreement and overcome difficulties. Identifying and working with a good partnership broker is particularly important during the early stages of building a partnership. This role can be assumed by a member of the partnership or by an external individual / organisation that knows the different partners well and is trusted by them.

“Partnership challenges can be overcome with good communication procedures for training, sensitisation, and the sharing of documents and reports.”

**Fisheries Programme Manager
International Conservation Organisation**

4.4. The MSC as a partnership broker

As an independent, non-profit organisation that has relationships across the world with a diverse range of stakeholders from different sectors, the MSC may and on a case by case basis sometimes act as a partnership broker. In such cases the role of the MSC will include providing information and guidance on certification and the assessment process and identify and bring stakeholders and potential partners together. The MSC would not normally broker an improvement phase.

4.5. Technical Consultants as a partnership broker

Technical Consultants are fisheries experts who have a wide experience in the MSC programme and are able to work with fisheries to help develop and implement action plans to support efforts to meet the MSC Standard. Technical Consultants can provide support to fisheries in a facilitating role.

For more information on Technical Consultants visit: www.msc.org/go/technical-consultants

“The challenges can be reduced by sensitisation and openness on the benefits. This requires the creation of mechanisms for consultation where issues are constantly discussed.”

Senior Fishery Officer, Department of Fisheries

Fisherman from the
Vietnam Ben Tre clam
hand-gathered fishery.

Partnership in action



© Leonard Fäustle

The Ben Tre clam fishery in Vietnam

In 2009 the Ben Tre clam fishery in Vietnam achieved the first successful MSC certification in Southeast Asia. The fishery is operated by members of local cooperatives who handpick the Ben Tre hard clams using metal rakes and mesh sacks. The clams are sold to domestic markets and exported to Europe, the US, Japan, China and Taiwan. A partnership between the cooperatives, the Ben Tre People's Committee, the Ben Tre Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and the WWF played a central role in the achievement of MSC certification. DARD and WWF worked together to provide training in the management of clams and workshops and meetings to share information on regulations and their

implementation. Research organisations such as the Nha Trang Institute of Oceanography, the Research Institute for Aquaculture No 2 (RIA no 2), the Research Institute of Marine Fisheries (RIMF) and Can Tho University also played an advisory role to the partnership.

“As the first MSC-certified fishery in Southeast Asia, the Ben Tre clam fishery will play a key role in demonstrating how certification can conserve resources, preserve local communities, and positively impact the bottom line for business – all at the same time.”

Meredith Lopuch, WWF-US Fisheries

5. Getting Started

A single organisation, often with the help of an individual champion, usually takes the lead in developing the idea for a partnership around a fishery. This role may be taken up by a fishery wishing to make improvements and work towards certification, or by other stakeholders such as a government agency, fishing industry association or private company interested in supporting a fishery to achieve this. In bringing different stakeholders together and reinforcing the fact that constraints to certification can be overcome through collaboration, the lead partner frequently acts as a partnership broker (see Section 4.3). Before the partnership begins, it is important for the lead partner or partnership broker to look carefully at the context in which the work will be carried out. This involves identifying relevant stakeholders, deciding which activities are most necessary to support fishery improvements, checking the overarching environment and selecting partners.

5.1. Researching the context

Identifying the fishery

A key component at the initial start of the partnership is to identify the fishery around which the partnership is being formed and to highlight key information on the fishery including initial sustainability information, markets and information about the fishers and communities involved in the fishery. The template opposite can be used to collate initial information about the fishery.

This information will help to generate an initial idea of potential partners with an interest in supporting a process towards certification in the fishery and to generate an initial idea of some of the gaps that may exist in the fishery.



Fishing boats at
the octopus fishery,
Toliara, Madagascar.

Summary information of Fishery	
Name of the fishery	
Name of the species	
Location of the fishery	
FAO Area (if known)	
Volume of landings	
Gears and method used	
Number of vessels in the fishery	
Stock assessment i. Is stock assessment carried out ii. What is known of the stock status	
What is the impact of the fishery on the ecosystem (other species and habitat)	
What are the management regulations in place for the fishery	
Markets	
Potential client and contact details	
Names of stakeholder groups associated with the fishery (NGO groups, government organisations, fisher organisations, seafood companies)	
General comment	

5. Getting Started *continued*

Identifying relevant stakeholders

Identifying and consulting stakeholders with an interest in sustainable fishing will assist in choosing what activities a partnership should focus on and who should be most closely involved. This process has the additional benefit of raising awareness about the MSC certification process and providing increased support for the partnership's work.

Choosing your activities

By examining the table in Partnership Activities (Section 3), a fishery's position in relation to the assessment process and the activities that are necessary for that stage can be identified. A general discussion among stakeholders can then be held about what activities would be of most value in supporting fishery progress towards MSC certification.

For a fishery improvement phase a more detailed approach will be required. A pre-assessment will be required in order to identify specific gaps against the performance indicators. After pre-assessment there will be a need to identify specific activities to help the fishery meet the requirements for the performance indicators. The document, Fishery Improvement Action Plan and Guidance will be a useful tool to help specify activities for a fishery improvement phase and identify partners that can implement those activities.

5.2. Selecting partners

Partners should be chosen from those stakeholders with the greatest interest in, and importance to, the proposed focus of activities. They might include organisations who have worked together before or new partners who can bring fresh ideas, contacts, resources, knowledge and skills to assist fishery improvements.

Some partnerships choose to limit membership to ensure smooth management while others may seek a larger number of partners in order to access more resources and achieve wider impact. Partnerships often start with a small group of partners and invite more members to join as their work progresses.

The partner profile template which is shown opposite can be used to identify possible partners and the roles that they may be able to play in a partnership towards MSC certification.

Bringing potential partners on board

Each potential partner should be encouraged to hold internal meetings to discuss the benefits and the challenges of working in partnership. If the risks for a potential partner outweigh the benefits of involvement, their membership may not be in the interests of the partnership as it is unlikely that they will be able to engage fully in the proposed activities. Partners that can drive change in a fishery are of extreme importance to the success of a partnership to bring about certification in a fishery. The following tips are useful for bringing potential partners on board:

- Encourage discussion and dialogue about the partnership and its proposed activities.
- Identify key people who support the partnerships goals and objectives and can encourage involvement internally.
- Hold a workshop or meeting to explain the benefits of MSC certification and the activities needed to support this.
- Carry out visits to partner organisations / groups to present the partnerships aims and proposed activities.
- Use a good partnership broker to encourage prospective members to join.
- Get to know potential partners well and establish good informal relationships with their representatives.
- Ensure that you communicate what the partnership hopes to achieve clearly and concisely.
- Ensure clarity about the potential roles that partners will be expected to play in a partnership.

Partner profile sheet		
Name of partner		
Address		
Type of organisation		
Fisher group		
NGO		
Private company (retailer, exporter)		
Development agency		
Research, Academic		
Fishery management		
Other		
Contact person		
Name		
Tel		
Email		
Expectations and potential benefits from this partnership for this partner (e.g. source certified product, access to new markets, maintain access to markets, improvement in fishery, sustained community livelihoods, improve CSR, etc)		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
Potential contribution to this partnership (see the partnership activities table for possible activities)		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

6. Setting up the partnership

After the preparatory work has been completed partners will need to refine the proposed focus of their work and establish ground rules for collaboration. They will also need to agree on roles and responsibilities and establish structures and systems for working together.

6.1. Building the foundations for working together

Agreeing on goals and principles

In initial meetings and discussions partners should ensure that their commitment to working together is reinforced by:

- Revisiting the partnership's goal and ensuring that everyone signs up to it.
- Sharing different incentives for working together so that all partners understand their collective and individual interests for partnering.
- Establish some simple partnership ground rules such as respect for different viewpoints; consideration for one another's time; clear communication; and agreement to pursue activities to the best of each partner's ability.

“There must be clarity about roles and remit!”

Fisheries Biologist
Public Research Organisation

Allocating roles and responsibilities

Partner roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined and understood so that all partners are aware of who is undertaking what. A partnership project template could be used to track activities, roles, responsibilities and agreed timeplan in a project, see example template opposite. For a fishery improvement stage a more detailed example of an action plan template is provided in the document – *Fisheries Improvements Action Plan guidance*. **Refer to Section 9 for a link to this document.**

“Clear agreement on roles of stakeholders is needed from the beginning of the process.”

Marine Programme Officer
International Conservation Organisation

“The sustainability purpose should always be emphasised and placed on top.”

Marine Programme Officer
International Conservation Organisation

Planning the work

Partners should draw up a planning framework which includes:

- The focus of the activities that will be undertaken to support the fishery.
- Agreement on how the activities will be carried out and the resources that they will need.
- A timescale for the completion of activities with clear short, medium and long-term objectives.
- The roles and responsibilities required for carrying out the work.

Partnership project action plan						
Partnership project name						
Partnership project objective						
Stage	Action / Tasks required		Resources required	Lead partner organisation for this activity	Supporting partners	Timescale
Initiation	1					
	2					
	3					
Pre-assessment	1					
	2					
	3					
Fishery Improvement phase (see <i>Action Plan guidance document</i>)	1					
	2					
	3					
Preparation for full assessment	1					
	2					
Full assessment	1					
	2					
Post assessment	1					
	2					

6. Setting up the partnership *continued*

6.2. Establishing partnership systems

Choosing a structure

A partnership needs an appropriate structure for carrying out its work. A formal structure such as a legally registered entity with a centralised management system can provide a strong focus for activities and offer a good position from which to mobilise and manage resources. A more informal structure is likely to be less bureaucratic, incur less cost and may be more suitable for partners working in small-scale local partnerships.

“It is better to have a small and simple structure to ensure speedy action.”

President, Small-scale Fisheries Association

Agreeing on partnership procedures

Whatever the type of structure chosen to manage the partnership, it is important that the procedures for working together are transparent, genuinely acceptable to all partners, and upheld by them. The partnership broker or project leader should check that key procedures have been agreed on as appropriate. Use the example checklist opposite.



Fisherman from the
Vietnam Ben Tre clam
hand-gathered fishery.

Checklist for partnership procedures

Item	
Decision-making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Where will partnership decisions be made? – Who will lead the process? – Are all partners comfortable with the level of formality or informality? – What is the basis for decision-making (Consensus / majority vote etc)? – What kinds of issues need to be decided by all partners? 	
Financial Arrangements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Who is responsible for finances and accounting? – Will the partnership be audited? If so, how? – How will financial information be communicated internally and externally? 	
Communication & Information Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How often should partners meet? – What reporting mechanisms should be put in place? – How will information about the partnership communicated internally and externally? – Who will be responsible for information management? 	
Conflict Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How will conflicts be managed? – How will conflict resolution procedures be made clear? 	
Reviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What monitoring and evaluation systems are needed? – Who will be responsible for these? – When will they be conducted? 	
Preparing for change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What action will be taken if a partner decides to leave? – How will new individual / organisational members be briefed? – What action will be taken if the partnership is threatened by unexpected events or changes in external circumstances? – Change management strategy. 	

6. Setting up the partnership *continued*

6.3. Signing a partnership agreement

A partnership agreement binds the different partners together, ensures clarity about objectives and the management of activities, and serves as a useful point of reference if there are misunderstandings. Although this can take the form of a formal contract or legal agreement, a simple Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or cooperation accord is often the preferred option.

“In order to address challenges, there should be a partnership agreement which clearly defines the roles, responsibilities and obligations of each partner.”

President, Small-scale Fisheries Association

Checklist for partnership agreement contents

Item	
Partners: list of organisations involved.	
Statement of intent: short summary of the aim of the partnerships and the activities to be undertaken.	
Roles and responsibilities: each partners role / contribution to the partnership.	
Contact person: key contact point for all partners.	
Structures and procedures: short summary of how the partnership will be managed.	
Financial arrangements: responsibility for administering funds and accounts.	
Reviews: agreement to monitoring.	
Other issues: intellectual property rights, etc.	

7. Keeping the partnership on track

Once the partnership is underway it is important to ensure that partners are fully engaged and deliver on their commitments so that activities have positive results. As well as evaluating progress in meeting goals, partners should regularly review how they are working together in order to identify and address obstacles that may prevent the successful completion of activities.

7.1. Ensuring delivery on commitments

Making partners accountable

To ensure that partners do what they have agreed to do it is important to find ways of making them accountable. Regular information-sharing on targets and expected standards of performance will assist this.

The following tips are helpful for ensuring delivery:

- Get partnerships to report on their contribution to activities.
- Keep written meeting minutes with action points and check these regularly.
- Remind partners of their roles and responsibilities.
- Encourage partners to report on changes or challenges that affect their ability to deliver on commitments.
- Use the partnership agreement to draw attention to the obligations that partners have signed up to.
- Use review procedures to assess progress.

7.2. Maintaining engagement

Tips for encouraging ongoing engagement include:

- Communicate regularly (through, workshops, meetings, reviews, visits, newsletters, email, phone calls, etc).
- Demonstrate early tangible achievement that can transmit a sense of achievement to partners.
- Ensure a solid review system to identify challenges and deal with them properly.
- Reinforce the overarching goal of MSC certification and sustainable fisheries.
- Revisit and strengthen action plans.
- Create an open atmosphere so partners can share concerns.

7.3. Reviewing

Partners should put systems in place for:

- **Reviewing their work together** – to ensure that incentives are being met, check the processes for working together and address challenges relating to participation.
- **Reviewing the impact of activities** – to assess results and evaluate the performance of the partnership in achieving fishery improvements and making progress towards certification.

Choices about who conducts a review, and when a review should take place, will depend upon the time and resources available. Reviews can be carried out internally among partners, by an external reviewer, or a combination of both. A useful way of checking on how partners are working together is to use regular meetings to share progress and discuss challenges. The table opposite provides examples of some review questions to help guide such meetings.

7. Keeping the partnership on track *continued*

Review questions	
Item	
Are partners happy with the progress of activities? What is working well and what is not?	
Is everybody delivering on their commitments and working to agreed standards?	
What is each partner gaining from the partnership? Are their specific incentives for involvement in the partnership being met?	
Are all partners happy with the processes for working together? (Decision-making, financial arrangements, communication, conflict management, monitoring and evaluation etc.) Are improvements necessary? If so, where and how?	
Are there particular internal or external challenges that need to be addressed by partners?	
Are we meeting / have we met our partnership goals and objectives?	
What kind of improvements have there been in the capacity and performance of the fishery as a result of our work?	
What have been the benefits for other partners?	
What has changed as a result of our work together?	
Documentation of the change that needs to be seen	

8. Preparing for the future

Partners will need to decide what should happen after they have completed their activities. Whatever decisions are made about the future of the partnership itself, it is vital that the results of its work are made sustainable.

8.1. Deciding what to do next

It is important to begin to think about what will happen after a partnership's work is completed during the early stages of working together. In this way ideas for the future can be developed as the work progresses. Options include:

- Moving the partnership to undertake the next stage.
- Dissolving the partnership when activities in a stage are completed.
- The fishery working individually with specific partners on further improvements.
- The fishery developing an entirely new partnership with different partners that builds on learning from the current collaboration.
- The fishery and other partners becoming part of a wider national or regional network that supports certification.
- All partners working individually to see that the changes promoted by the partnership are implemented inside their organisations.

Building upon partnership success

In Mexico the partnership work that led to MSC certification of the Baja California Red Rock Lobster fishery is being built upon by further research on ecosystem impacts and work towards reassessment. A continued commitment to staying in the MSC programme is seen as delivering benefits to the fishery and local communities.

“This community has no other alternative resources to develop. The fishery, especially lobster, is everything to us. We need to stay in this programme.”

Mario Ramade, Senior Biologist working with Federation of Fishing Industry Cooperatives in Mexico, quoted in Net benefits, The first ten years of MSC certified sustainable fisheries

8. Preparing for the future *continued*

Partnership in action



© MSC

The Mexican red rock lobster fishery was the first developing country fishery to be certified in 2004, and it recently became recertified in June 2011.

The Mexican Baja California Red Rock Lobster Fishery

The Mexican Baja California red rock lobster fishery was the first small-scale fishery in a developing country to become certified to the MSC Standard. The fishery operates a community-based system that involves cooperative management between fishers and the government. Nine fishing cooperatives belonging to the Federación Regional de Sociedades Cooperativas de la Industria Pesquera Baja California F.C.L (FEDECOOP) collectively applied as the client for the assessment of the fishery in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) with logistical support provided by Comunidad y Biodiversidad (COBi). A team of specialists, which included research scientists from the Centro Interdisciplinario de Ciencias Marinas del Instituto Politécnico Nacional (CICIMAR) and the Centro de Investigaciones Biológicas del Noroeste S.C (CIBNOR) also supported certification efforts.

The certification of the fishery led to its enhanced image and reputation and access to resources for research. In addition opportunities to develop markets for certified seafood products resulted in tangible social and economic benefits for the community.

“The Baja rock lobster fishery has demonstrated that MSC certification not only improves community fisheries that are already well-managed, but also empowers the people who depend on them for their livelihood.”

Meredith Lopuch, WWF-US Major Buyer Initiative quoted in ‘Net benefits, The first ten years of MSC certified sustainable fisheries’

9. Sources and further guidance

MSC materials

Marine Stewardship Council

www.msc.org

MSC Developing World Programme

www.msc.org/developing-countries

Fishery Improvement Action Plan Guidance

www.msc.org/go/action-plan-guidance-pdf

Get Certified! Fisheries

www.msc.org/go/get-certified-fisheries-pdf

Net benefits, The first ten years of MSC certified sustainable fisheries

www.msc.org/go/net-benefits-pdf

Protecting fisheries, improving livelihoods, MSC Developing World Fisheries Programme

www.msc.org/go/protecting-fisheries

Other materials

Case studies:

The Ben Tre clam fishery in Vietnam

http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/greatermekong/

The Gambia sole fishery

Atlantic Seafood Company, Contributing to standard of living in Gambia, Interview with Michel Huijser, 2010
www.docstoc.com/docs/49737913/Contributing-to-standard-of-living-in-Gambia

Tobey, J., Castro, K., Lee, V., Drammeh, o., Ibrahima, M.D., Crawford, B. & Vaidyanathan, T.

An Overview of Marine Fisheries in The Gambia and Preliminary Governance Baseline, Gambia-Senegal Sustainable Fisheries Program (Ba Nafaa), Coastal Resources Center, University of Rhode Island, 2009 www.crc.uri.edu/download/Gambia_Fisheries_Governance_Assessment.pdf

The Mexican Baja California Red Rock Lobster Fishery

The Red Rock Lobster Fishery Baja California, Mexico, Draft for Public Comment, Scientific Certification Systems, Oakland, CA, USA, August, 2003 www.msc.org/track-a-fishery/fisheries-in-the-program/certified/pacific/mexico-baja-california-red-rock-lobster/assessment-downloads-1/Public_Comment_Draft_Report_Mexican_Lobster_Sept03.pdf

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