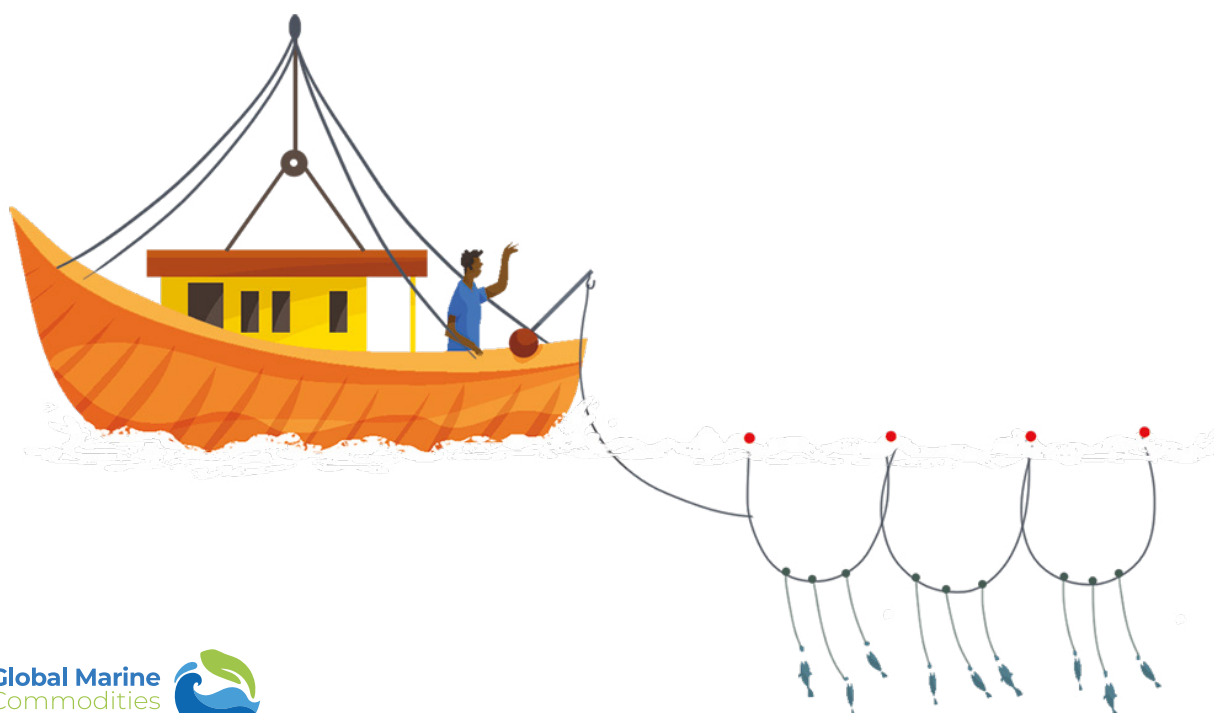




Key Considerations for Fishery Improvement Projects



Key Considerations for Fishery Improvement Projects

August, 2021

The content expressed in this report do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations, United Nations Development Programme or their Member States. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on the maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Copyright © 2021 United Nations Development Programme One United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without prior permission of UNDP.

Author: Duncan Leadbitter / **Editors:** Diego Orellana and Karen Hildahl /

Original Design and layout: Gabriel Hidalgo, Joca Diseño / **Original Cover Illustration:** ©Roger Ycaza

Adaptation Design layout & Cover composition based on Roger Ycaza Illustrations: Andrea Phillips, JM Advertising

For more information see:

www.globalmarinecommodities.org

Contents

Introduction	4
What is a fishery improvement project?	7
A note on the role of government and FIPs	9
Where do FIPs fit in?.....	9
The global experience of FIPs.....	11
Lessons learned from FIPs associated with the GMC Project.....	13
GMC dialogue platforms and FIPs.....	14
Comanagement and FIPs.....	15
Some universal themes.....	17
Making good governance work in favour of sustainability - FIPs, dialogue platforms and comanagement.....	18
What does best practice look like? Recommendations for successful FIPs	20
An expanding future for FIPs.....	22
Conclusion	24



Introduction

The Global Sustainable Supply Chains for Marine Commodities (GMC) Project is a Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded interregional initiative implemented by the Ministries and Bureaus of Fisheries, Production and Planning of Costa Rica, Ecuador, Indonesia and the Philippines, with technical support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and facilitated by the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP). The GMC Project contributes to the transformation of international seafood markets by mainstreaming sustainability in seafood supply chains originating in developing countries.

The project harnesses both top-down market-driven incentives, and a

bottom-up public governance model to effectively drive sustainability to “meet in the middle” of the fishery - supply chain interface. First, the project helps establish or strengthen Sustainable Marine Commodity Platforms (SMCPs) as overarching policy dialogue spaces where government, NGOs and academia, exporters, fisherfolk and producers come together to debate and formulate national policy and management plans for the sustainability of the target fishery commodities. The SMCP is the “bottom-up” consultative body that seeks to empower multiple groups of stakeholders to formulate management strategies aimed at promoting shared objectives for the long-term sustainable use of fishery resources.

Simultaneously, the project takes into consideration the market incentives from international seafood buyers and retailers to encourage producing countries to take necessary actions so that they can achieve “verified improvements” or “certified sustainable/responsible” fisheries. For example, through the Supply Chain Roundtables (SRs), SFP hosts fora for international seafood buyers who source directly from a specific seafood sector so that the buyers can work together in a pre-competitive environment to foster improvements in fisheries or aquaculture. Members of the SRs often prioritize sourcing seafood from fishery improvement projects (FIPs) and can even provide financial contributions to FIPs, ensuring adequate market support for the implementation of the incremental improvements needed to achieve sustainability.

SFP also helps large international retailers and food service companies to craft sustainable seafood purchasing policies, in which these companies make commitments to increase their seafood sourcing from certified sustainable or improving fisheries. When large companies commit to purchasing sustainable seafood, the market influence generated helps drive home the importance of sound fisheries governance and management systems in producing countries.

The aim of this document is to assist those involved in fishery improvement projects and related dialogue platforms by providing information that sets out the circumstance under which a FIP may be most likely to succeed. It makes use of a mix of lessons learned from the GMC project implementation teams and wider reviews of FIP implementation experiences from around the world.

The value of FIPs is their ability to engage market players in the journey towards sustainability and this ability can be enhanced if they engage with any existing, government established processes that have the same aims. It needs to be acknowledged that FIPs are neither unique in terms of consultation mechanisms in fisheries nor the main instrument for making progress on fisheries management. This in no means diminishes their value which can be enhanced by making connections to similar concepts such as comanagement, which is widely recognized as being a useful tool for engaging and consulting stakeholders.

We provide some ‘best practice’ suggestions which are relatively broad as the circumstances under which FIPs are created can be variable and there is no single pathway to success. We draw attention to both the similarities and differences between FIPs and other



consultation forums (dialogue platforms and comanagement) to ensure that overlaps and gaps are addressed by project managers and FIP participants.

Finally, we speculate on what the future may hold for FIPs and market driven improvements in fisheries more generally. While much remains to be done to

ensure that the basics of fisheries management are addressed, the recent focus on labour related challenges has rekindled interest in how social issues in fisheries are progressed more widely. Another important area is gender, which has been a topic among academics and fisher groups for many years.

From a project perspective, eight key messages guide the establishment, support and management of fishery improvement projects, as follows:





What is a **fishery improvement project?**

Fishery improvement projects are mechanisms by which seafood supply chain participants (such as companies involved in processing, wholesaling, and retail) can help contribute to improved fisheries management in a structured way. Increasingly, FIPs can also take on some social challenges, including labour, human rights and gender issues. A FIP is designed to actively involve those in the private sector with a commitment to providing incentives for producers to improve fisheries management.

Fishery improvement projects have grown in popularity since their inception in the mid 2000s. FIPs are commonly promoted as a pathway to certification, with the

most common certification standard pursued being that owned by the Marine Stewardship Council. This does not mean that other standards are irrelevant and there is a small but growing number of FIPs working to the Marine Trust standard which focuses on fish meal and oil and the GMC project has worked closely with one of these FIPs (Ecuador small pelagics). However, the much larger number of MSC destined FIPs has created a database which can be analyzed for trends and lessons learned. In the future, other frameworks, which may not be standards based, such as the Asia Seafood Improvement Collaborative, are likely to become available to help set goals for improving fisheries management.



The key elements of a FIP are as follows:

- **The establishment of a project steering committee** – this can include fishers, supply chain participants, technical personnel and, ideally, government representatives.
- **The creation of a gap analysis** – this is commonly a comparison of selected fishery attributes against an independent sustainability standard.
- **The preparation of an action plan** which sets out tasks to be undertaken to address the gaps in fishery performance.
- **Public reporting progress** on implementing the actions.

Fishery improvement projects have increased in number around the world. There is a growing literature base aimed at understanding the circumstances

under which they work. There is a strong learning by doing culture and FIPs continue to evolve.



A note on the role of government and FIPs

The concept of FIPs was created to harness the interest of the private sector in driving a transition towards sustainable use of fishery resources. Governments are almost universally the owners of these resources and are tasked with making decisions about who may access these resources and under what conditions. FIPs are designed to enable the private sector to take responsibility for, and exercise leadership in, seeking actions designed to pursue sustainable use. Government is not only a source of information and technical skills, but it also has the authority to create the rules required to enable the conditions for sustainable use to be created. In most circumstances having both industry and government at the table together helps develop the partnership approach. There may be circumstances where the private



sector needs to have its own conversations, and these should be respected but a FIP should be guided by the general principles of inclusiveness and transparency.

Where do FIPs fit in?

FIPs need to be seen in the context of the wider fisheries management framework. They are not stand alone exercises as they are explicitly designed to engage stakeholders in making improvements to a fishery and these are

largely about ensuring that the fishery is better managed. Understanding where FIPs fit in helps designers to work out how they can be best designed so that they are accepted (especially by government) and make progress as quickly as possible.



The GMC project creates dialogue platforms as a mechanism for engaging the private sector and government in designing pathways to sustainable production. From this perspective, FIPs can create a bridge between sector level platforms and fishery specific efforts as they operate along similar principles. The primary difference is that platforms are designed to be government coordinated and FIPs are designed to be led by the private sector. Platforms are also more focused on larger scales of organisation (e.g., whole of country, whole of commodity etc.) while FIPs can be more targeted.

FIPs also need to work closely with any government mandated consultation bodies and relevant staff managers and scientists) established under law or policy. These may operate at a jurisdictional level or at a fishery level and establishing a working relationship (either via a Memorandum of Understanding or overlapping membership) will ensure that outputs from the FIP are incorporated into government decision making processes.

Fisheries management is not a project and requires an ongoing investment of resources and commitment. If government mandated consultation structures are in place, then the FIP may simply dissolve when it has achieved its goals. If the FIP is the only consultation forum in place

then consideration should be given to transitioning it to a formal, government endorsed advisory body.

In fisheries, there is a well-developed concept known as comanagement which has been widely adopted across the world and this approach is based on getting registered/licenced stakeholders and government together to progress management. There is thus a solid basis in countries that implement comanagement to build upon when designing dialogue platforms and adding market actors would be an iterative step.

The attainment of sustainable use in fisheries is based upon the implementation of good fisheries management. Central to this is the design and implementation of rules that define how much fish can be taken, conserving the supporting aquatic environment, and ensuring that the exploitation of the fish stocks meets societal objectives in terms of social and economic benefits. Discussion is important but is not an end in itself and this is also true for consultation forums.





The global experience of FIPs

FIPs are a global phenomenon, which attests to their flexibility across different types of fisheries and jurisdictions. While the FisheryProgress.org website does not cover all types of FIPs, it does demonstrate how FIPs can be utilized as a tool in developed and developing countries. FIPs may or may not work towards standards but for those that do, the standard is a mechanism for defining fishery management performance and goal setting. Standards act as a 'currency' such that buyers in one country can instantly understand and accept fisheries that are working towards standards they know.

The Global Marine Commodities project has worked with both the Marine Stewardship Council and Marine Trust standards. However, there are others currently in existence and, undoubtedly more will emerge.

There are several papers in the peer reviewed literature that analyses the performance of FIPs (see for example [Cannon, J. et al \(2018\)](#), and [Crona, B. et al \(2019\)](#)). In their in-depth analysis of extant FIPs, California Environment Associates or CEA ([2020](#)) found that the factors documented as being most conducive to FIP success include:

- **Leadership** – within this category are factors such as having strong connections to government processes, a good understanding of FIP processes and local leadership.
- **Stakeholders** – having the right stakeholders involved to be able to leverage the sorts of changes required.
- **Level of investment of time and resources** – mainly focused on having continuity and sufficient funding.
- **Market leverage** – supply chain structure and market leverage influence the degree of incentives for driving change. Shorter supply chains with a small number of actors have a greater chance of driving success.

The finding related to markets is a consequence of the deliberate focus of FIPs on market actors in supply chains.

According to CEA (2020) a country's fishery management capacity is the best predictor of how well a FIP performs. FIPs in higher-income countries are more likely to report improvements as these countries

tend to perform better when it comes to managing fisheries – FIP or no FIP. This raises questions about the ability of FIPs to achieve the sorts of major reforms required in countries with low governance capacity in the short or medium term and suggest that extra resources/capacity and time may need to be allocated in such circumstances.

Individual leadership, more than implementing organization or type, is more commonly associated with successful FIPs. Committed individuals are crucial for driving a project forward and this observation is consistent with findings from the literature evaluating co-management interventions. These individuals tend to be local people with preexisting relationships with fisheries managers or government officials, who are engaged for years and who have a strong technical understanding. These relationships are important as FIPs must compel governments to adopt changes needed to reform the fishery, particularly if certification is sought as this requires good management to be in place. In the absence of such individuals external parties can train local people in how to develop and run a FIP.

Lessons learned from FIPs associated with the GMC Project

The GMC project has interacted with fishery improvement projects in all four pilot countries. The nature of the interactions has varied as follows:

Ecuador

The Small Pelagic FIP was established with the GMC project alongside the dialogue platform and has used the Marine Trust standard as a goal. The FIP is industry driven and the platform government driven.

Filipinas

The Blue Swimming Crab FIP was established prior to the GMC project commencement but was not well connected with government. The government's Technical Working Group on the crab fisheries became the dialogue platform and a closer relationship with the FIP was developed.

Costa Rica

The Large Pelagic FIP was established and registered in fisheryprogress.org, though as a result of lack of agreement between some stakeholders and the current FIP coordinator, some members have started a new FIP following the GMC recommendations and using the information generated by the project.

Indonesia

There are a number of FIPs operating in Indonesia and most were underway prior to the commencement of the GMC project. The GMC project has provided support to Tuna and Blue Swimming Crab FIPs.

In reviews of the lessons learned from the involvement of the GMC Project in FIPs, the following general advice can be put forward:

- **Clear frameworks** – The framework under which the FIP operates needs to be

clearly defined. This includes setting rules for existing and new participants and arrangements for cost sharing. A useful approach is for the participants to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) such that roles and responsibilities are

clear. In the absence of a legislative basis for a FIP, then private sector agreements such as MoUs can play a role.

- **Public-private partnerships** – While FIPs should be led by the private sector, government should be considered for inclusion in any FIP. Without government the chance of recommendations regarding policy or legal reform will go nowhere. Having government involved will aid the integration of the FIP activities into other activities being undertaken outside of the remit of the FIP. These could include research or management on species or gear types that are relevant to the FIP.

- **Information** – The FIP requires good information on the state of the fishery. This is needed to conduct the gap analysis that will be used as the basis for a fishery action plan. Ongoing data collection is required to check to see if the plan is having the desired effects.
- **Capacity** – The FIP will require support in the form of expertise (including fisheries management, social issues and environmental management), funding and capacity building (such as training).

Circumstances will vary from FIP to FIP and it is important to understand the motivations of those involved (and those that are not).

GMC dialogue **platforms and FIPs**

The GMC dialogue platforms are explicit mechanisms for facilitating interactions between governmental and non-governmental stakeholders of all kinds. To date they have had more of a focus on the harvest sector (fishers) and less on the post harvest sector. In a similar fashion to FIPs, they have been designed to focus on commodities and thus have a more explicit market connection than comanagement.

In an overview of the operation of the dialogue platforms established as part of the Global Marine Commodities Project, ten key lessons for [Multistakeholder Dialogue Spaces have been identified](#). In summary the main lessons relate to ensuring that platforms are well connected to any existing arrangements both in terms of administration and personnel and there is access to support in terms of finance, information and capacity.



The findings of these analyses emphasize the need to build upon what is already in place and to ensure that stakeholders are sufficiently empowered to participate

in a meaningful way. Time is always an important consideration as is ensuring that all parties have the capacity to engage in a way that draws out valuable advice.



Comanagement and FIPs

Managing fisheries commonly requires government to make decisions that may have a material impact on who may fish in a given area and when, where and how they may fish. These decisions can be contentious and a source of significant conflict if not approached correctly. Comanagement aims to develop a relationship between government as the creator of laws and stakeholders as the potential beneficiaries

of not only fishery exploitation, but the decisions and rules put in place to facilitate sustainable use.

The term comanagement is quite broad and covers a range of scenarios including where government consults but makes the decisions, government and stakeholders agree on decisions, through to stakeholders making the decisions and government implementing them. All of these are based

on dialogue and all result in decisions being made that, at least in theory, result in more sustainable use.

There are some common themes that emerge from experiences across the world that are relevant for the establishment and operation of FIPs and dialogue platforms. These include:

- The need for formal structures -stakeholders will take the forum seriously and respect the results if a comanagement forum is a formal part of the fishery management process. Where possible, a consultation forum needs to tap into and work with any existing arrangements, including any traditional management.
- Consultation will be enhanced if all players (government and non-government) have sufficient capacity to engage.
- Consultation arrangements need to be inclusive, transparent (meetings announced and minutes taken and distributed), accountable and able to demonstrate that the fisheries agency takes their views seriously.
- Good information is required if stakeholders are to be fully informed about the existing circumstances, the options for making progress and the consequences of those options. Data derived from monitoring programs will

assist stakeholders to judge whether their fishery is progressing according to any management plan.

- Comanagement is about fisheries management and tough decisions commonly need to be made. Good planning is essential and fishery management plans need to have a conflict resolution mechanism in place and good enforcement measures.

Fisheries management takes time and building trust may take many years and the consultation process will be ongoing. Many well managed fisheries have a dedicated consultation forum permanently in place as a fishery requires ongoing intervention and responses to changing circumstances and new information.

The comanagement approach is not necessarily linked to market demands for sustainable seafood but it is very much related to the need to improve fisheries management. However, as will become apparent from the material set out below, there is a great deal of overlap with the central tenets of both dialogue platforms and FIPs. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) member country governments in Asia have adopted comanagement as the preferred way forward for managing their fisheries and this makes the additional steps associated with FIPs and dialogue platforms easier to put in context.

Some **universal** themes

There are some consistent themes that emerge from the analyses presented above which not only help demonstrate that new consultative forums like dialogue platforms and FIPs

are consistent with more established approaches like comanagement but are also consistent with key elements of internationally agreed documents such as the [Guidelines for Small Scale Fisheries](#).

Small Scale Fisheries Guidelines	Comanagement	Dialogue Platforms	FIPs
Article 6. Consultation and participation	Central to the comanagement concept. Roles need to be clear in regulations/policy.	Central to the establishment and operation of dialogue platform MoUs used.	Central to the establishment and operation of FIP MoUs used.
Article 7. Rule of law	Emphasised as being crucial. Sanctions and enforcement are important.	Government involvement means that law making is possible.	Cannot create laws but working to standards that require laws.
Article 8. Transparency	Central to building trust	Central to building trust?	Central to building trust. Public reporting is a key feature.
Article 9. Accountability	Specifically mentioned in peer reviewed papers and project reports.	Implied via the need to develop trust.	Implied via the need to develop trust.
Article 10. Economic, social and environmental sustainability	Government and stakeholders tend to look more broadly than environmental.	Government and stakeholders tend to look more broadly than environmental.	More environmentally focused. Wider considerations at a very early stage of development
Article 11. Holistic and integrated approaches	Relationship with other structures and arrangements within the country is a high priority. Integration of tools needed.	Relationship with other structures and arrangements within the country is a high priority. Links with related agencies and other layers of government needed.	More focused on integration along the supply chain. Framework and coordination needed.
Article 12. Social responsibility	Usually, a major topic of interest for stakeholders.	Not much information in this area.	Not specifically covered in FIP standards.
Article 13. Feasibility and social and economic viability	Baseline information important – fishery, economic and social. Stakeholders and government can discuss feasibility of options.	Baseline information important - fisheries, economic and social. Stakeholders and government can discuss feasibility of options.	Baseline information important – main focus is on fishery status. Stakeholders can discuss feasibility of options.

Table 1 – comanagement, dialogue platforms and FIPs help implement the FAO Small Scale Fisheries Guidelines



In addition to the attributes above, there are also some observations that cross all three approaches such as:

- Capacity building – participants in the consultation forums (both government and non-government) require training on fisheries management and the forums will require time from personnel to gather information, prepare materials (including meeting records), seek out funding and provide advice and briefings.
- Time – it takes time to get people onboard and focused. Moreover, some of the issues will take many years to resolve.
- Monitoring and information – ensuring that plans have an adequate information

base is important but, equally, the lack of complete information should not prevent a plan from being agreed and implemented. There needs to be a mechanism in place to monitor progress and address information gaps.

- Funding – implementing good fisheries management costs money and without the investment of funds, history shows how fisheries can degrade. While the need for funds for activities such as research, monitoring and enforcement is commonly accepted, the need for an investment in consultation is less well understood despite the evidence that consultation can build the trust needed to create and respect management rules.

Making good governance work **in favour of sustainability –** **FIPs, dialogue platforms and** **comanagement**

Fisheries can be complex and a clear pathway to sustainability may be obscured by competing environmental, social and economic needs. Often, there are trade-offs to be made and, for many fisheries, there is a need to reduce catches to restore stocks. Although many stakeholders would like simple solutions, the reality is that the transition to sustainability will need to be determined by dialogue and negotiation. Mechanisms

to facilitate dialogue in the pursuit of sustainable fisheries are common around the world and the growing interest in, for example, FIPs and dialogue platforms, is an encouraging sign that stakeholders see the value in becoming involved in fisheries management.

With this broader range of options for involving stakeholders there comes a need to ensure duplications and gaps are

avoided. Furthermore, given the poor state of many fisheries there is a need to use scarce resources wisely and ensure that governments feel empowered to make decisions that are in the best interests of both fishery sustainability and people.

The key elements of good fisheries management ([Cochrane and Garcia 2009](#)) are set out in Table 2 below. The potential role of the consultation forums is described as followed:

Main elements required for good fisheries management	Comanagement	Dialogue Platforms	FIPs
Information/data collection and analysis	Yes	Yes	Yes
Market focus	Possibly	Yes	Yes
Involving stakeholders in discussions	Yes	Yes	Yes
Setting goals, objectives and harvest control rules	Possibly	Possibly	No
Creating laws and regulations controlling fisheries	Possibly	Possibly	No
Controlling the environmental impacts of fishing	Possibly	Possibly	Possibly
Allocation of access to fish resources (who can fish, where and how much)	Possibly	Possibly	No
Enforcement	No	No	No
Writing and adopting management plans for specific fisheries	Possibly	Possibly	No

Table 2 – How consultation forums may play a role in key elements of good fisheries management

- ‘Yes’ - there is existing evidence that this type of forum has been active in the element of interest based on reviews.
- ‘Possibly’ - the management element requires government involvement but whether this takes place is dependent on whether the consultation forum is configured to facilitate that. For example, FIPs rarely (if ever) result in government making regulations via agreement at

the FIP level. For dialogue platforms, whether a government chooses to make a regulation depends on whether the dialogue platform is operating at a fishery level or at a policy level.

- ‘No’ – the forum has no formal role. This is largely focused on FIPs due to the voluntary nature and the fact that they are commonly established without any government mandate.



What does best **practice look like?** **Recommendations for successful FIPs**

The aim of FIPs is to improve fisheries management. Those that work to recognized standards need to make progress on fisheries management measures as set out in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and interpreted by independent standards. For FIPs to have market recognition there needs to be verifiable progress made. The available literature suggests that the majority of FIPs make most progress on information gathering and least progress on changes in management. This may be related to a lack of good integration with existing management arrangements run by government, which may include dialogue platforms. FIPs should build on what is already in place in terms of existing consultation structures and policy commitments. FIP practitioners need to recognize the limitations of what can be achieved with the current FIP model and act to identify and address any gaps.

1. Open and inclusive participation

A FIP needs to ensure that it has the right people involved, especially those in government who can make decisions when the stakeholder group makes commitments. Participation should be

open to all with an interest in the fishery and this includes women and marginalized groups. A FIP needs to have clear rules, an open-door policy (allowing observers for example) and be transparent (advertising meetings well ahead of time, taking minutes and distributing those minutes). Where possible, the FIP should be led by stakeholders (fishers or supply chain).

2. Consultation framework

The FIP needs to be formally constituted to ensure it has a level of authority that generates respect among the participants. Those that participate need to be legally recognised (such as, for example, companies or licensed fishers) and if government representatives are included, these should be at a senior level.

3. Capacity building

A FIP requires adequate capacity in several forms. It will require technical expertise (available either in-country or externally), administrative support and access to information. FIP participants may also require training to enable them to broaden their knowledge of fisheries management processes.

4. Funding

A source of funding is required to enable members to participate, for documents to be prepared and for external expertise to be retained. Funding will also be required to enable some of the activities set out in the action plan to be undertaken, such as data collection. Participants need to look broadly for funding and include FIP participants themselves (e.g., companies), aid donors, philanthropic organizations and governments.

5. Working with existing or new structures

Where there are existing consultation structures in place, especially those formally established by government, the FIP needs to establish links such that duplication and potential antagonism is avoided. The stakeholders may wish to consider a formal agreement or having members that are common across both the FIP and the existing structures (being aware of the time and costs impositions this may create). Where there are no existing structures, the FIP may wish to consider a transition strategy such that the FIP becomes formally recognized as a consultation body for government fishery management purposes.

6. Information (availability and timeliness)

A FIP requires sufficient information to enable it to function successfully and it also needs to be a source of information as well. A baseline

assessment of the fishery is needed to prepare the action plan and the implementation of the plan needs to be tracked and reported upon. The fisheries management process relies on information derived from research and monitoring.

7. Flexibility and growth

Fisheries management is a dynamic process that needs to respond to changes in the environment, the marketplace and in community expectations. So too a FIP needs to be responsive but aware of the limitations of the market-based approach in terms of the range of issues that are solvable. FIPs should be grounded in internationally agreed principles to ensure that the changes sought are founded on well researched and thoroughly discussed measures.

8. Market leverage

What sets a FIP apart from other consultation forums is the key involvement of the seafood supply chain. The participants need to have a commitment to responsible sourcing and a willingness to communicate this to suppliers and governments.

GMC dialogue platforms and FIPs

The reliance of existing FIPs on private standards may result in issues that are of local or regional importance either not being covered or not being a priority. Neither the MSC nor Marine Trust standards have well developed social components even though social issues have been central to fisheries management challenges for thousands of years. With the increasing recognition that fisheries sustainability issues are largely governance issues, there has been a growing focus on how governance failures manifest themselves. Examples include the inequities of sharing the benefits of fisheries exploitation and a plethora of illegal activities ranging from slavery to drug smuggling.

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on some social issues such as the conditions under which fishers and seafood workers are employed. The primary concern has been about ensuring compliance with laws and, in their absence, international norms. While such a focus is long overdue, the lack of integrated analyses of any links to poor fisheries management may result in the underlying issues being missed. For example, incentives for illegal behaviour may be created by declining catches and no amount of extra enforcement will force better pay if

fish stocks and associated financial returns are declining.

Labour and employment considerations are but a small component of social issues in fisheries and these are closely linked with economic issues. Fish stocks can be used for commerce, subsistence or cultural reasons and who benefits depends on how government allocates access to those stocks. For example, if all the fish are allocated to subsistence fishers then this will be beneficial for local supplies. Allocating the fish to an industrial sector may create value added processing related jobs onshore and thus increase net economic benefit but if poorly implemented then subsistence food sources may be negatively impacted. Equity issues such as allocation also extend to considerations around gender. Research has shown that men and women have different roles along the seafood production chain, but men dominate decision making and access to resources and information.

Extending the scope of FIPs to include social and economic issues may provide some opportunities for further reform of fisheries but there will need to be care devoted to how the actions undertaken are devised and implemented. If the standards to which FIPs



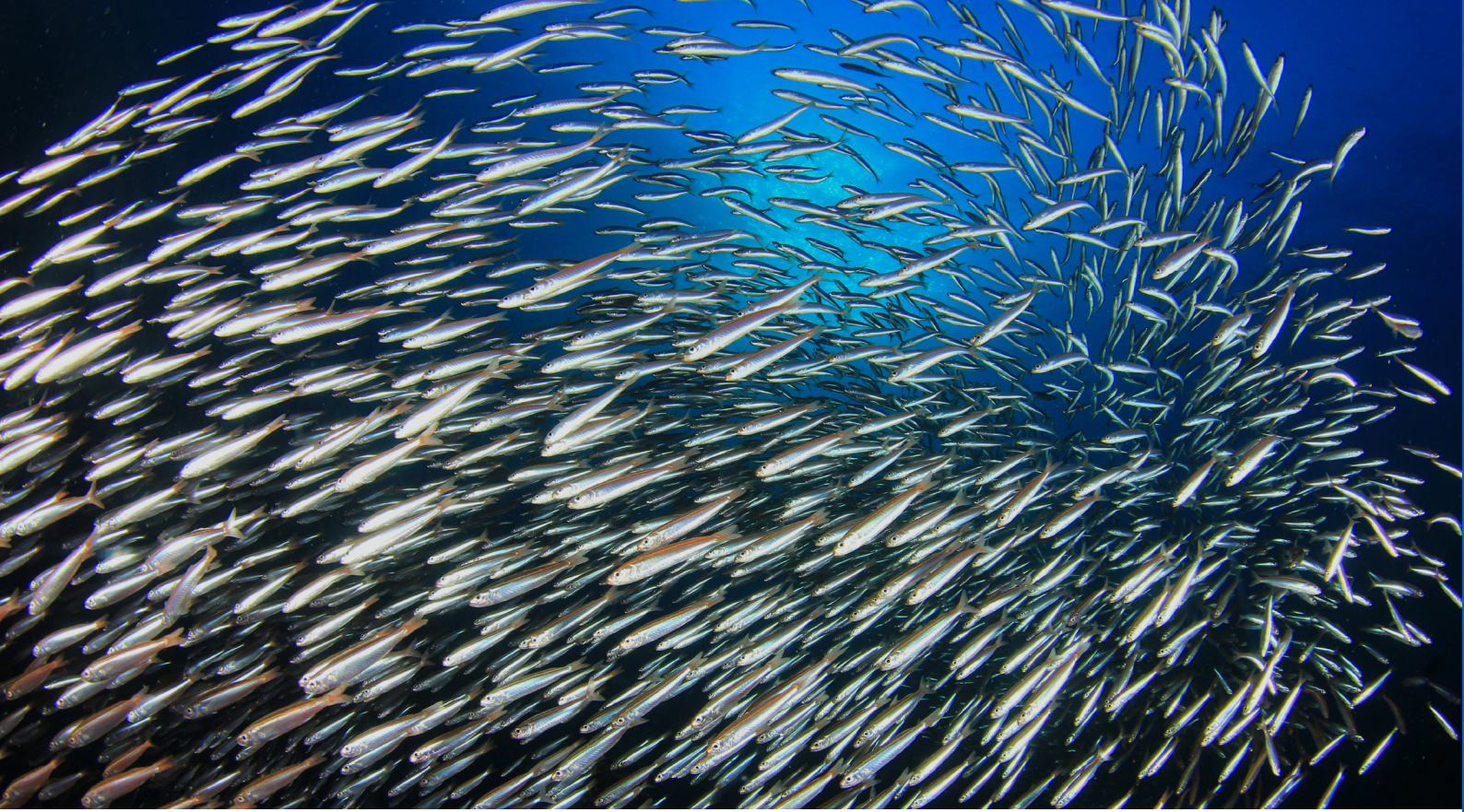


work are altered to include social and economic issues, there are questions like whose values were used to set the standards and over what time period can reform be expected to take place? At present, even though the supply chain is involved in FIPs, the role of companies is focused on pushing for change at the fisheries management level, not on reform of themselves in terms of aspects such as gender. Thus, the configuration of FIPs needs to be thought through and whether they are fit for purpose in dealing with issues which are outside of the scope of the current standards used.

For complex equity issues such as gender, the lack of agreed goals and objectives makes the establishment of verifiable actions challenging. Nevertheless, with respect to gender, the GMC

Project has recently identified some generic areas that FIPs can incorporate into their planning activities. For example, a recent [gender in FIPs guidance document](#) provides advice on how a FIP action plan can address such issues.

Further work needs to be undertaken to determine where in the FIP action plan these requirements would be best suited because, as mentioned above, the current plans are oriented towards standards that currently do not address social issues. At present, the stock, ecosystem and management components are addressed in separate modules and one option may be to design a separate nodule for social issues which could include, among other facets, gender, labor and human rights, each with clear performance goals to define best practice.



Conclusion

There is a wide variety of fisheries around the world and the need for reform is as urgent as it has ever been. There is no single solution for driving reform but at their core, fishery problems are people problems. Getting people together and enabling them to decide what the issues are and what solutions will work best has been found to be critical to success across the world.



Fishery improvement projects have evolved as a useful tool for evolving the private sector, and especially supply chain entities, in the drive for sustainable use. The FIP concept has proven to be adaptable because it taps into lessons learned in other consultation approaches such as comanagement. Finding commonalities across these different approaches, such as the need for inclusiveness, transparency,

capacity building, funding and information, helps FIPs to be more readily accepted and to harness their ability to tap into market demand for responsible sourcing.

This guidance document is aimed at helping those that either need to establish or support a FIP to have a deeper understanding of where FIPs can fit in. In some countries there may be no consultation structures in place at all and so a FIP can create a long-lasting forum. In other cases, a FIP may need to work closely with existing arrangements. The guidance in this document will enable a FIP supporter/implementer to tap into any existing resources (people, information, structures) to enable a FIP to be established efficiently and with minimum duplication. It should be read in conjunction with other guidance documents made available by the Global Marine Commodities project.

For more information visit:
www.globalmarinecommodities.org

Follow GMC Project

 Global Marine Commodities
 @GlobalMarineCo1