

Guidelines for Supporting Fishery Improvement Projects

Revised July 2022

Working together – environmental, human, and labor rights groups, and the seafood industry – can be a powerful force for improving environmental and social responsibility in fisheries.

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The Alliance wishes to recognize the perseverance and dedication of the FIP Guidelines Revision Process Working Group members. Thank you!

The FIP Guidelines review process aimed for, and achieved, approval from a supermajority of the Working Group.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

Alliance	The Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FIP	Fishery improvement project
FRA	Financial Rapid Assessment
Guidelines	Guidelines for Supporting Fishery Improvement Projects
HRDD	Human rights due diligence
ILO	International Labour Organization
MSC	Marine Stewardship Council
NGOs	Nongovernmental organizations
SRA	Social Responsibility Assessment Tool
UN	United Nations
WSR	Worker-driven Social Responsibility

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Guidelines for Supporting Fishery Improvement Projects

The Alliance supports the efforts fisheries are making to improve the responsibility of their seafood products.

Introduction

In 2008, the Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions (Alliance) released the Common Vision for Sustainable Seafood, a guide that outlines six steps businesses can take to develop and implement a sustainable seafood policy. One of these steps is for retailers, suppliers, and processors to make responsible sourcing decisions. To fulfill this step, buyers who purchase seafood from fisheries that are not yet sustainable can pursue various strategies to help those sources move toward environmental sustainability.

One strategy is to engage suppliers, producers, and other industry partners in a fishery improvement project (FIP). The decision about whether to engage one's supply chain in a FIP rests with the buyer and will depend on the specific requirements of the company's responsible seafood policy. The ultimate goal is to create incentives for measurable, positive change in our oceans and seafood supply.

In 2012, the Alliance released the Guidelines for Supporting FIPs (Guidelines) and updated versions in 2015, 2019, 2021, and 2022. The Guidelines explain how the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Fisheries Standard is used to measure the environmental performance of fisheries and the progress FIPs make over time. All fisheries can use the MSC Fisheries Standard, even if they don't plan to pursue MSC certification. Using an accessible and credible standard to measure FIPs' progress allows Global Hub members and businesses to make more informed decisions about participating in or sourcing from these projects.

With the 2022 update, the Guidelines explain how FIPs create opportunities to drive change through collective public-private action to address human rights and labor rights issues. To identify social risks, the Guidelines recommend that FIPs use the Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector (SRA), a rapid assessment tool that FIPs can use to identify areas of risk related to social issues, or similar tool.

In addition, the Guidelines explain how FIPs are accountable for creating a workplan with time-bound objectives. If a fishery doesn't make measurable improvements in its environmental and social performance over time, the Alliance recommends buyers and suppliers share their concerns about the lack of progress. If no improvement occurs after direct engagement with the project, the Alliance recommends that companies take additional steps consistent with the goals and requirements of their respective responsible seafood policies, which may include no longer purchasing seafood from that source and communicating why.

The Alliance believes FIPs should strive to achieve a high level of environmental sustainability and social responsibility that allows fisheries—and the communities and businesses that depend on them—to thrive. Ultimately, all FIP participants are expected to work to achieve a level of environmental performance consistent with an unconditional pass of the MSC Fisheries Standard. Understandably, performance at this level is a long-term goal for some fisheries.

The 2022 Guidelines reflect the latest understanding of FIP best practices. The Alliance strongly believes standardizing the structure and process for FIPs is essential to enable seafood companies to both support them and help them meet their commitments to human rights and environmental and social responsibility.

Definition of a Fishery Improvement Project

A FIP is a multi-stakeholder effort to address challenges in a fishery. These projects use the power of the private sector to incentivize improvements in the fishery and seek to make these changes endure through policy change. FIPs always include goals related to environmental sustainability. In recent years, many FIPs have also begun to address other issues, such as human rights, social responsibility, and even financial sustainability.

Definition of a FIP

The following are key elements of a FIP.

Participation

FIP participants, including supply chain actors and other stakeholders, may fall under more than one of the categories below. The degree to which they're part of a FIP will depend on the improvement goals. Importantly, a FIP must include active participation by producers or other supply chain actors, described below. Active participation means contributing financial or in-kind support¹ to the FIP, working on actions in the workplan, or both. Groups that are potentially impacted by FIP activities but don't meet the definition of "active participation" should also be consulted when planning and implementing a FIP.

- **Producers** (e.g., fishers, fishing rights holders, or groups representing them) should be involved in developing the FIP from the beginning. Producers are directly affected by changes implemented to the fishery as a result of the FIP, and they have a vast amount of knowledge about the fishery. Producers can also play a key role by participating in FIP-related meetings and implementing specific FIP activities when relevant (e.g., gear changes, bringing observers on board their boats, etc.)
- **Supply chain actors** (e.g., processors, intermediaries, exporters, importers, distributors, foodservice providers, and retailers) can support FIPs through financial or in-kind contributions, political leverage, procurement policies, as well as help guide the long-term objectives based on the market's sustainability requirements.
- **Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)** (e.g., trade and labor unions, and environmental and social organizations) can be involved in FIPs in numerous ways, including playing a coordination/advisory role, convening stakeholders, and implementing FIP activities. In some cases, these entities may be able to provide financial support and connections to other resources, such as scientific experts.
- **Scientific experts** and researchers can support research and collect relevant environmental, social, and economic data. This expertise is necessary to ensure the FIP's activities are generating robust results that can be used to support government management actions.

¹ The Ford Family Foundation defines in-kind contributions as "services, material, equipment or labor committed or received at a conservative value that would otherwise be paid from the project budget. Both the donor and the service received should be identified. In other words, in-kind contributions are goods (wholesale value) or services provided instead of cash for one of your project budget line-items. Both the revenue and the expense projections should reflect the in-kind contribution." (Source: The Ford Family Foundation. "How to Calculate In-Kind Contributions." Accessed June 14, 2022.)

<https://www.tfff.org/how-we-fund/grants/guidance-eligibility/how-calculate-kind-contributions>.

- **Government** involvement, action, and oversight may be necessary when a FIP requires significant changes in fishery management. In a cooperative relationship between a FIP and a government institution, the FIP could provide access to private sector financing that supports scientific work the government cannot undertake. In addition, the government can ensure FIP activities are appropriately designed and are generating results that it can use to better manage the fishery.

Public Commitment

Participants must commit to financially investing in and improving the fishery (directly or in-kind). This could be done by signing a memorandum of understanding, publishing a participant list, etc.

Objectives

A FIP must define the near-term scope of the project with a set of time-bound objectives.

Workplan

A FIP must develop and implement a workplan, including an associated budget and deadlines, which is designed to address the deficiencies in the fishery and social responsibility risks to achieve the project's objectives. The workplan and deadlines must be made publicly available. Public disclosure of the budget isn't required.

Progress Tracking and Public Reporting

A FIP must regularly track and report progress, including 1) publicly reporting progress on actions and their results with supporting documentation every six months, and 2) updating indicator scores and providing supporting evidence for score changes every 12 months. All FIPs are expected to make progress over time.

As detailed above, FIPs must update data regularly and changes/improvements must be linked to credible evidence. In addition, data must be reviewed by a third party to ensure credibility. The Alliance strongly recommends that projects be listed on FisheryProgress in order to report publicly in a standardized manner, a memorandum of understanding, publishing a participant list, etc.

About FisheryProgress and FishSource

- [FisheryProgress](#) provides FIPs with a centralized platform to update project data every six months. FishChoice staff review all data to ensure it's complete, accurate, credible, and compliant with the site performance and reporting requirements before publication. In addition, the seafood industry and NGOs use FisheryProgress to track FIPs and find reliable, standardized information about them. For example, FisheryProgress makes it easy for seafood companies and other stakeholders to review a FIP's stage and status and determine if they want to support, or source from, a FIP. The website is powered by FishChoice, an Alliance Global Hub member.
- [FishSource](#) provides companies and NGOs with up-to-date, impartial, and actionable information on the sustainability of fisheries and the improvements they need to make to become more sustainable, including FIP progress ratings. The website was created by Sustainable Fisheries Partnership, an Alliance Global Hub member.

Basic and Comprehensive FIPs

The Alliance has defined two FIP types: basic and comprehensive. Both FIP types must address social risks.

Basic	Comprehensive
Basic FIPs are a good entry point for fisheries to begin addressing specific environmental challenges.	Comprehensive FIPs aim to address the full range of environmental challenges so that a fishery can achieve a high level of sustainability.

The primary differences between basic and comprehensive FIPs are the levels of scoping to inform the development of the workplan, objectives, and verification requirements. The Alliance encourages fisheries developing new improvement projects to pursue a comprehensive FIP. The Alliance also encourages basic FIPs to transition to comprehensive over time.

Side-by-side Comparison of Basic and Comprehensive FIPs

	Basic	Comprehensive
Scoping	FIP completes a needs assessment and optional scoping document based on the MSC Fisheries Standard to identify environmental challenges. The needs assessment must include, at minimum, at least one indicator from each of the three principal areas of the MSC Fisheries Standard.	FIP engages a party experienced with applying the MSC Fisheries Standard to complete an MSC pre-assessment and optional scoping document. A party experienced with applying the MSC Fisheries Standard refers to a registered MSC technical consultant , an accredited conformity assessment body , or someone who has other demonstrated qualifications that meet the FisheryProgress criteria.
Objectives	FIP defines time-bound objectives to address a specific set of the fishery's environmental challenges. A basic FIP aims to achieve a level of performance consistent with a score of 80 or above for the relevant MSC performance indicators.	FIP defines time-bound objectives for addressing all of the fishery's environmental challenges to achieve a level of performance consistent with a score of 80 or above for all MSC performance indicators.
Workplan	Based on the needs assessment, optional scoping document, and participant input, the FIP develops a workplan with actions that will improve the fishery's environmental performance in accordance with the workplan's objectives. For a comprehensive FIP, the workplan must be developed by a party experienced with applying the MSC Fisheries Standard. ²	

² A party experienced with applying the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) refers to a [registered MSC technical consultant](#), an [accredited conformity assessment body](#), or [someone who has other demonstrated qualifications](#) that meet the FisheryProgress criteria.

Verification of progress	Independent evaluation of action results and performance against the MSC Fisheries Standard is encouraged but not required.	Every three years, comprehensive FIPs must arrange for an independent evaluation of action results and performance against the MSC Fisheries Standard. The evaluator must be experienced with the MSC Fisheries Standard and independent from the organization implementing the FIP.
	In-person evaluations are recommended. The Alliance strongly recommends that remote evaluations adhere to ISEAL's Guidance on Remote Auditing Good Practices .	
Human Rights and Social Responsibility	All FIPs must, at minimum, comply with the requirements set out in the FisheryProgress Human Rights and Social Responsibility Policy or take an approach that's at least equivalent to address social risks.	

Process for FIPs

There are five stages of a FIP's environmental progress and four statuses, defined below. While the path to improvement isn't always linear, the stages and statuses help groups and companies evaluate improvement projects and make decisions about engagement and/or sourcing.

FIP Environmental Stages

STAGE 0: FIP Identification

A target fishery that may benefit from a FIP is identified, and a supply chain analysis is conducted to understand who participates in the fishery and what market leverage exists.

STAGE 1: FIP Development

The fishery's performance is evaluated against the MSC Fisheries Standard, and stakeholders are recruited to participate. Specifically, the development stage includes:

- **An assessment of the fishery's environmental performance.**
 - Basic FIPs conduct a needs assessment that must include, at minimum, at least one indicator from each of the three principal areas of the MSC Fisheries Standard to determine environmental challenges and improvements needed in the fishery. The Alliance recommends basic FIPs include all MSC indicators in their needs assessment, if possible, and consider using the MSC pre-assessment as their needs assessment if they anticipate transitioning to a comprehensive FIP in the future.
 - Comprehensive FIPs conduct an MSC pre-assessment to determine where the fishery falls short of the MSC Fisheries Standard. The pre-assessment must be completed by a party experienced with applying the MSC Fisheries Standard.

- **A scoping document.**

A scoping document is an optional tool that summarizes the needs assessment/MSC pre-assessment results and recommends strategies for addressing the fishery's challenges. If

a scoping document is completed, it must be made public and, in the case of comprehensive FIPs, completed or evaluated by a party experienced with applying the MSC standard.

- **A stakeholder map and engagement process.**

A stakeholder map identifies the most relevant parties to the FIP, including producers, supply chain actors, NGOs, scientific experts, and government(s). The mapping and engagement processes should consider the full range of stakeholders who will be impacted by the project or have a role in addressing the environmental challenges in the fishery.

FIPs are encouraged to make the process for adding participants transparent. Additionally, projects in the development stage are encouraged to determine whether other improvement projects exist in the same fishery. If so, FIPs should collaborate, where possible, rather than duplicate existing efforts. Implementers can check FisheryProgress or FishSource to see if there are other active or prospective improvement projects within the same fishery.

STAGE 2: FIP Launch

The project participants, objectives, and workplan are finalized and publicized. The launch stage includes:

- **Confirmation of project participants.** The FIP participant list is posted publicly, and a memorandum of understanding may also be provided to offer additional detail on the participants' roles.
- **Participant meeting.** The FIP participants meet to discuss the needs assessment/MSC pre-assessment and determine a course of action.
- **Objectives.** The Alliance recommends implementers break the process down into a series of time-bound objectives of five years or less.
 - Basic FIP objectives must address a specific set of the fishery's environmental challenges. A basic FIP aims to achieve a level of performance consistent with a score of 80 or above for the relevant MSC performance indicators.
 - Comprehensive FIP objectives must address all of the fishery's environmental challenges to achieve a level of performance consistent with a score of 80 or above for all MSC performance indicators.
- **Workplan.** Based on the needs assessment, optional scoping document, and participant input, the FIP develops a workplan that includes the necessary actions to meet the project's objectives. For a comprehensive FIP, the workplan must be developed by a party experienced with applying the MSC Fisheries Standard. A workplan must include actions, responsible parties, and estimated time frames to complete each action and task.
 - Actions are the major activities that must be completed to address the deficiencies identified in the needs assessment/MSC pre-assessment. A workplan may also include tasks, which break actions down into specific steps that describe how the actions will be accomplished.
 - Responsible parties are the organizations and people responsible for completing each action.

- o Estimated time frames denote anticipated start and end dates for each action and task (e.g., January 2023 – June 2023).
- **Budget.** A budget is required and includes, at minimum, a list of the main expenses and revenue sources for the FIP. A budget may anonymize or aggregate the sources of revenue, and may include in-kind contributions as well as monetary contributions. The budget must be updated yearly. FIP participants must adopt the budget, though the budget's details don't need to be made public.

During Stage 2, the workplan must be made public. When developing the workplan, the Alliance also recommends assessing any risks that may impact the ability of the fishery to make progress as planned.

STAGE 3: FIP Implementation

The FIP begins taking action toward making improvements and tracking its progress. This stage includes:

- **Implementing the actions in the workplan.** Implementation includes consistent engagement with regulators on these actions.
- **Tracking and reporting on progress.** Basic and comprehensive FIPs self-report their progress as follows:
 - o Every six months, publicly report their progress on workplan actions and results with supporting documentation.
 - o Every 12 months, update the indicator scores and provide supporting evidence for score changes.
 - o Every three years, comprehensive FIPs must arrange for an independent evaluation of action results and performance against the MSC Fisheries Standard (e.g., changes in fisheries policy, management, or fishing practices and, ultimately, the health of the fishery). The evaluation must be conducted by a party that's both experienced with applying the MSC Fisheries Standard and independent of the organization implementing the FIP.
- **Course correcting if needed.** If a FIP doesn't achieve the actions in its workplan within the specified timeframe, the project should report the reasons actions were missed and update the workplan to reflect adjusted actions and timeframes.

STAGE 4: Improvements in Fishing Practices or Fishery Management

FIPs document any demonstrated improvements based on their implementation of the workplan. Improvements in this stage include:

- **Improvements in policy, management, or fishing practices.**
- **Increases in scores for MSC performance indicators focused on management or information.**

STAGE 5: Improvements on the Water

FIPs document any demonstrated improvements on the water. Improvements in this stage include:

- **Increases in scores for MSC performance indicators focused on outcomes.**
- **Verifiable change on the water**, such as a reduction in fishing mortality, an increase in the target stock's biomass, a reduction in habitat impact, etc.

Note: Stages 4 and 5 are not necessarily sequential. These stages evaluate the FIP on two different sets of results. Both stages may not be required with every FIP.

FIP Statuses

Prospective

FIPs are considered prospective when they're in Stage 0 (FIP Identification) or Stage 1 (FIP Development). FIPs can be categorized as prospective for up to 12 months.

The intent of listing prospective projects is to help businesses identify FIPs to participate in and prevent the development of multiple FIPs covering the same species/geographic region. Once a FIP completes Stage 2 (FIP Launch), it's considered active.

Active, Completed, and Inactive

FIPs in Stages 3-5 are considered active until they provide independent verification that they have completed their objectives or become MSC certified, upon which they'll be considered completed.

A FIP will be considered inactive if it:

1. reports work has been suspended without completing the objectives;
2. doesn't publicly report for 12 months;³
3. doesn't report any Stage 4 or 5 results in three years or;
4. fails to meet the minimum requirements outlined in this document, including those in the Human Rights and Social Responsibility section below.

Additional Information

- [FisheryProgress FIP Review Guidelines](#)
- [FisheryProgress FIP Social Review Guidelines](#)
- [FisheryProgress templates for launching a FIP](#)

³ To return to an active status, the FIP must fully update its public reporting.

Human Rights and Social Responsibility in FIPs

The framework of a FIP creates opportunities to drive change through collective public-private action to address human rights and labor rights issues. FIP participants can collectively advocate for the government to improve human rights and labor regulations and oversight. FIPs can also invite worker unions, fisher organizations, or other representative groups to participate in (or partner with) the FIP to improve communication with fishers, workers, and their communities and ensure that FIP actions don't adversely affect them.

FIPs are encouraged to examine the full range of social issues that may exist in their fisheries—from human rights abuses to labor issues to community impacts—and prioritize issues to address in their workplans.

The Alliance believes all FIPs have a role in addressing social risks. All FIPs must, at minimum, comply with the following requirements:⁴

1. Demonstrate there's a public policy statement outlining a commitment to human rights and social responsibility⁵.
2. Provide information about the vessels or fishers included in the FIP.
3. Undertake best efforts to inform fishers of their rights.
4. Demonstrate there's a grievance mechanism available to all fishers in the FIP.
5. If the FIP operates in a high risk-context, complete a risk assessment based on the Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector (SRA) *or a tool that is at least equivalent* that considers the suite of social issues covered within the SRA.
6. Create a social workplan to address, at minimum, all areas of high risk.
7. Report publicly on Requirements 1-6.

Depending on the laws of the jurisdiction(s) in which a company does business, it may face criminal, civil, or regulatory liabilities for human and labor rights violations, such as human trafficking, forced labor, and hazardous child labor, in its supply chains.

Therefore, the Alliance recommends companies seek the expertise of regional human rights resources (e.g., local labor unions, NGOs involved in the protection of human rights, and/or legal experts) to both understand the laws, human rights, and labor conditions in a specific region and options for addressing risk and/or violations.

⁴ The FisheryProgress Human Rights and Social Responsibility Policy complies fully with these requirements. FIPs not reporting on the FisheryProgress platform must take an approach that's at least equivalent to that policy.

⁵ The Monterey Framework's three principles of socially responsible seafood are 1) protect human rights, dignity, and access to resources; 2) ensure equality and equitable opportunity to benefit; and 3) improve food and livelihood security. (Source: RISE. "The Monterey Framework: Defining Social Responsibility in the Seafood Sector." Accessed June 15, 2022.

<https://riseseafood.org/topics/actioning-the-monterey-framework/>.

Supplemental Social Responsibility Guidance and Resources

In addition to seeking regional human rights expertise, the following resources will provide FIP participants with a foundation on:

- fundamental human rights,
- fundamental labor rights,
- labor rights specific to the seafood sector,
- gender equity,
- business responsibility to respect human rights,
- human rights due diligence,
- worker-driven social responsibility, and
- grievance mechanisms.

Fundamental Human Rights

Fundamental human rights include, at minimum, the rights set out under the International Bill of Human rights, inclusive of the:

- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- [International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#)
- [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

Labor Rights

Fundamental labor rights include:

- freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining,
- elimination of forced or compulsory labor,
- abolition of child labor, and
- elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) [Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#) commits ILO Member States to respect and promote fundamental labor rights, even if they haven't ratified the relevant [ILO Conventions](#).

In addition, the [ILO Work in Fishing Convention 188](#) is the key international instrument that outlines minimum labor standards for workers on commercial vessels.

Gender Equity

Gender equity⁶ is a critical component of the International Bill of Human Rights.

Learn more:

- [Basic Guidelines for a Gender-Responsive Fishery Improvement Project](#)
- [Pacific handbook for gender equity and social inclusion in coastal fisheries and aquaculture](#)
- [Towards gender-equitable small-scale fisheries governance and development](#)

⁶ "Gender equity is the process of being fair to men and women. To ensure fairness, measures must often be put in place to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from operating on a level playing field." (UNESCO Institute for Statistics. "Gender Equity," June 22, 2020. <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/gender-equity?wbdisable=false>.)

- [Additional resources on achieving sustainability of small-scale fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication](#)

Business Responsibility to Respect Human Rights

The Alliance recommends that FIPs familiarize themselves with the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) to ensure they're considering all potential and actual human rights-related risks they may encounter and the roles and responsibilities of businesses and states. In particular:

Principle 13 states:

The responsibility to respect human rights requires that business enterprises: (a) avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts through their own activities, and address such impacts when they occur; and (b) seek to prevent or mitigate adverse human rights impacts that are directly linked to their operations, products or services by their business relationships, even if they have not contributed to those impacts.

Principle 14 states:

The responsibility of business enterprises to respect human rights applies to all enterprises regardless of their size, sector, operational context, ownership, and structure. Nevertheless, the scale and complexity of the means through which enterprises meet that responsibility may vary according to these factors and with the severity of any adverse human rights impacts.⁷

Learn more:

[UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights](#)

Human Rights Due Diligence

Human rights due diligence (HRDD) is the specific ongoing risk management process that a company needs to follow in order to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for how it addresses its adverse human rights impacts in its operations and supply chains. HRDD includes four key steps: assessing actual and potential human rights impacts, integrating and acting on the findings, tracking responses, and communicating how impacts are addressed.

According to the UNGPs, all businesses have a responsibility to undertake and support HRDD requirements throughout their supply chains. In seafood supply chains, this includes the fishing vessel and community levels. Each supply chain actor is responsible for regularly conducting due diligence with their upstream suppliers and remediating any human rights or labor violations in a timely manner.

[The Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector \(SRA\)](#) is an example of a diagnostic or rapid assessment tool that FIPs can use to identify areas of risk related to social issues. FisheryProgress requires FIPs that meet one or more of the criteria identified during a self-evaluation to complete the SRA. The Alliance recommends that all FIPs complete the SRA or

⁷ United Nations. 2011. "Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations 'Protect, Respect, and Remedy' Framework."

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinessshr_en.pdf.

equivalent risk assessment tool regardless of the self-evaluation outcome. This risk assessment should consider the full suite of social issues covered within the SRA.

Learn more:

- Additional guidance on building an HRDD program is available on the [Roadmap for Improving Seafood Ethics \(RISE\)](#), a free resource tailored to meet the needs of seafood companies.

Worker-driven Social Responsibility

The Alliance recommends FIPs adopt the worker-driven social responsibility (WSR) model for achieving meaningful and lasting human rights protections in corporate supply chains. The WSR model requires social improvements to be:

- worker- and fisher-driven,
- enforcement-focused, and
- based on legally binding commitments that assign responsibility for improving working conditions to the global corporations at the top of those supply chains.

Worker- and fisher-driven approaches may look very different across industrial and small-scale fisheries. Small-scale fisheries face unique challenges, such as the diversity, dynamism, and informality of the sector or labor force. These fisheries may have limited legal pathways for supporting worker- and fisher-led processes.

Learn more:

- [Worker-Driven Social Responsibility Network's Statement of Principles](#).
- [International Labor Rights Forum's Four Essential Elements for Independent Monitoring at Sea](#)
- [The Bangladesh Accord](#) and [Fair Food Program by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers](#) are best practice examples from other sectors.
- The FAO's [Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries](#) provide important guidance for encouraging fisher, worker, and community engagement, among many other aspects of small-scale fisheries. More than 4,000 participants from 120 countries were consulted to develop these Guidelines.

Grievance Mechanisms

It's important to ensure workers are aware of and can access an effective grievance mechanism if abuses occur. [Verité](#), [Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations](#), and [ELEVATE](#) provides guidance on developing, implementing, and using grievance mechanisms.

Supporting FIPs

Supporting FIPs can help engage additional seafood businesses in existing projects and spur demand from buyers and suppliers for new projects to improve other fisheries with environmental problems.

Supporting FIPs

Financial Support of FIPs

Completing a FIP can take significant time and resources. Considering the financial dimension of fishery improvement work from the outset can reduce the risks associated with FIPs and contribute to the durability of improvement.

It's especially important to ensure that the burden and costs of improvement don't fall disproportionately on producers. Uneven distribution of the costs of improvement can exacerbate inequities that are prevalent in seafood supply chains. These inequities are likely to jeopardize the success of a FIP by forcing a reduction in scope, longer implementation timeframes, or both.

Buyers and brands should ensure that they support FIPs so they may undertake the assessments and improvements defined by these Guidelines. This support includes ensuring FIPs are well-resourced and supported financially, so the cost of improvement doesn't fall solely on upstream FIP producers and participants.

Assessing the costs and business case for conducting a FIP

The Alliance strongly recommends FIP participants create a budget detailing the costs of both environmental and social improvements after they complete an assessment of a fishery's performance. To help ensure the viability and durability of a FIP, it's crucial that FIP participants clearly identify the sources for covering their costs. Importantly, a budget detailing the costs and revenue sources demonstrates the business case for starting a FIP.

The Alliance also recommends that FIPs assess key FIP participants' viability and responsibility during FIP development using the [Financial Rapid Assessment \(FRA\)](#) or a comparable tool. The FRA applies basic tenets of organizational capacity and the foundations of credit analysis that a lender would use to evaluate an enterprise. The results of this type of financial assessment may be used by the business to help improve their economic viability and position in the fishery and ensure against unintended financial consequences. (The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and U.S. Agency for International Development use similar assessments.)

Once a financial assessment has been completed, FIPs may choose to keep the results confidential. However, the Alliance recommends FIPs publicly report that financial due diligence has been conducted, both to demonstrate the financial viability of key FIP participants and actively monitor essential financial indicators.

Businesses' Decisions to Engage in FIPs

After reviewing publicly available information and/or consulting with NGO partners, businesses can engage in improvement projects in several ways, including:

- Participating in a FIP by contributing financially/in-kind, getting involved in the project activities, or both;
- Sending a letter of support for the project to its organizers, government representatives, or suppliers; and/or
- Asking supply chain actors to participate in the project or source from a fishery engaged in an active FIP.

Seafood stakeholders have varying criteria for recommending FIP sourcing or engagement to companies. The Alliance recommends that companies that source from basic FIPs encourage those FIPs to transition to comprehensive over time. If no improvement occurs after direct engagement with the project, the Alliance recommends that companies take additional steps consistent with the goals and requirements of their respective responsible seafood policies, which may include no longer purchasing seafood from that source and communicating why.

Purchasing decisions or decisions about whether to engage one's supply chain in a FIP rests with the buyer and will depend on the specific requirements of the company's responsible seafood policy. The ultimate goal is to create incentives for measurable, positive change in our ocean and seafood supply.

Signatories

The following signatories express their support for the Guidelines for Supporting Fishery Improvement Projects. Signatories include:

- **Companies that buy and sell seafood:** These signatories have committed to using the Guidelines as the foundation of FIPs they're a part of and, whenever possible, source from FIPs that align with the Guidelines.
- **Organizations that participate in FIPs or provide guidance to businesses sourcing from FIPs:** These signatories have committed to using the Guidelines as the foundation of their FIPs and promoting FIPs that align with the Guidelines.
- **Individuals, precompetitive collaborations, and other businesses and organizations:** These signatories have expressed their support for the Guidelines and willingness to promote them.

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