

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PROCESSES (MSPs) IN RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Over the last decade, approaches to fisheries management and governance of fisheries resources have been undergoing a significant transition. The focus is shifting from the stock and species based management to conservation and ecosystem based strategy (EAF: Ecosystem approach to Fisheries Management). Governance is shifting towards community based and co management approaches, which emphasize fisher participation and development of authority and responsibility.

Why co-management? The crisis in fisheries and coastal communities is pressurizing national governments to look for alternative management strategies. These alternative approaches range from community based management and co management, meant to address the lack of participation and conflicts that were the legacy of centralized management, to market regulation and rights based management.

There is increasing realization that there is a need to change the structure of governance. Co management includes the sharing of governance structures between stake holders in the resource and institutions of local collective governments of common property. Co management is a consensus driven process of recognizing different values, needs, concerns and interests involved in managing a resource. Partnerships are pursued, strengthened and redefined at different times in the co management process depending on the existing policy and legal environment, the political support of government for community based actions and initiatives, and community organizations capacities to become partners of the government. Co management is a partnership arrangement in which government, the community of local resource users (fishers), external agents (Non-governmental organizations, academic and research institutions) and other fisheries and coastal resources stakeholders (boat owners, fish traders, money lenders, tourism establishments etc.) share the responsibility and authority for decision making in the management of a fishery. This form of responsible fisheries management approach entails the Multi-Stakeholders Process (MSPs) which aim to bring together all major stakeholders in a new form of communication, decision

finding/making on a particular issue.

What are Multi-Stakeholder Processes (MSPs)?

Multi-Stakeholder Processes (MSPs) in fisheries management are processes that aim to involve stakeholders in improving situations that affect them. These are forms of social interaction that enable different individuals and groups who are affected by an issue to enter into dialogue, negotiation, learning, decision making and collective action. It enables government staff, policy makers, community representatives, scientists, donors, business people and NGO representatives (people's organizations: POs) to think and work together.

The characteristics of *MSPs*: *MSPs* focus on a situation/problem/issue to improve and involve stakeholders with common (but often conflicting) interests, working across different sectors and scales. *MSP* has a clear process, time frame and agreed rules about cooperation. It integrates 'bottom up' and 'top down' approaches, engages with institutional change and involves stakeholders in learning processes (not just negotiation). In *MSPs*, structured processes/methodologies enable participants to engage in constructive dialogue, learning and action. It also recognizes the legitimacy of different perspectives and knowledge sources (e.g. scientific knowledge and 'local' knowledge), deals consciously with politics and power and enables capacity building for participation.

The process model for *MSP* interventions involves Setting up → Planning strategically (planning)

→ Implementing and managing (acting) → Learning and adapting (reviewing) (Figures 1 and 2).

In *setting up* the *MSP* interventions, it begins with some general concern, issues or conflict, like decreasing fish stocks. The purpose, scope and mandate for the proposed *MSP* are clarified by undertaking an initial situation analysis (stakeholders, issues, power and institutions). An interim steering body is established, with community support. Scope, mandate and stakeholder expectations are established and the process, time-frame, resource needs and institutional requirements are outlined. (Contd...)

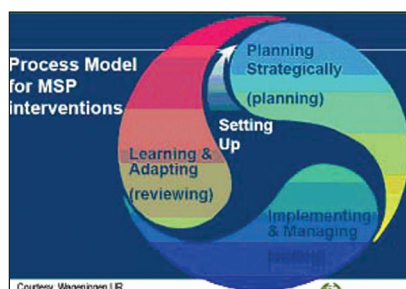


Figure 1

Courtesy: Wageningen UR

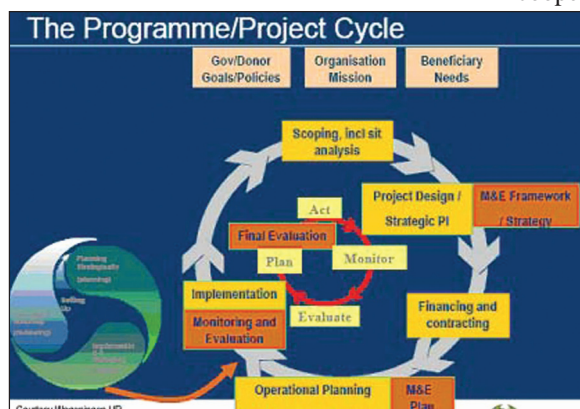


Figure 2

Courtesy: Wageningen UR

(Multi-stakeholder Contd. from page 1)

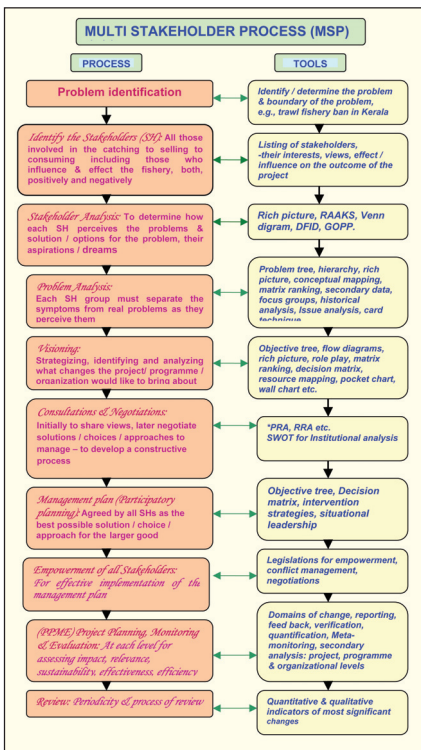
In *planning for the MSP interventions*, it is necessary to build stakeholders understanding of each other's values, motivations and interests, generate visions, identify issues (problems) and opportunities, examine options (scenario analysis) and make decisions, set objectives and identify actions, time frames and responsibilities, establish criteria for success and monitoring mechanisms and document and communicate the strategy.

In *implementing and managing MSP interventions*, it is important to develop integrated projects/initiatives and action plans, establish management structures and responsibilities, secure resources and technical support, develop capacity of stakeholders, manage implementation, carryout, out monitoring and maintain stakeholder commitment.

In *learning and adapting MSP interventions*, it is essential to create a learning culture and adapting environment, define success criteria (performance questions and indicators), develop and implement monitoring and evaluation system, monitor progress, review and evaluate progress and identify lessons and feed lessons learnt back into strategies and implementation.

The process of *MSP interventions* and the tools employed for each level of the multi stakeholder process is shown in the *flow chart*.

Role of CMFRI as secondary stakeholder in the Multi Stakeholder Process:



In marine fisheries development and management the primary stakeholders are the fishers. The secondary stakeholders are governments at four levels (central, state, district and gram panchayat) and the external agencies (NGOs, academic and research institutions). Other key stakeholders are the boat owners, fish traders, money lenders, sea food exporters. Coastal stakeholders such as those involved in tourism, port industry, hotels are also important components in the fisheries management planning process.

CMFRI being a secondary stakeholder has a key role in the fisheries management planning process. The major inputs include providing technical/scientific information/support and database, platforms for dialogue and social learning, supportive policies and programmes, transparent and independent knowledge systems, building institutional support, developing facilitation and leadership capacity, creating interactive learning processes and facilitating MSPs. In employing the MS process in problem/issue identification, CMFRI has a significant role in identifying and analyzing the issue/s, besides facilitating the collective decision making and the development of an effective fisheries management plan by all the stakeholders.

(Article contributed by Dr. P. Laxmilatha, Senior Scientist, MFD)