



Triple Impact Fisheries Evaluation Framework: Integrating Environmental, Social and Business Performance

Version 1.0

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Overview of the assessment tools	4
An agnostic approach	4
Scope	4
Primary users	4
Assessor qualifications and experience	5
Environmental rapid assessment (ERA)	5
Social responsibility assessment (SRA)	6
Financial rapid assessment (FRA)	6
Performance and capacity indicators	6
Scoring	9
Overview of the Triple Impact FIP process	9
Definition	9
Process	10
Unit of Assessment	10
Value chain analysis	11
Conduct triple impact assessment	11
Develop an integrated project workplan	11
Develop an integrated project budget	12
Report progress on each dimension	12
Sequencing and prioritization	13
Literature cited	14
Contributors	14
Citation	14

Introduction

The sustainable seafood movement has and continues to drive improvement of upwards of 30% of global seafood production. It has done this primarily through fishery improvement projects (FIPs) – multi-stakeholder interventions that leverage market forces. Unfortunately, despite the successes achieved to date, accumulating research identifies several limitations to the traditional FIP model, including:

- A tendency to stall (Sampson et al. 2015)(CEA 2020)
- Lack of suitability for developing world and small-scale fisheries (Sampson et al. 2015)(Bailey et al. 2016)(Barr et al. 2019)
- Failure to accommodate social performance, representing important risk for stakeholders and the movement (Kittinger et al. 2017)(Barr et al. 2019) and,
- Disproportionate allocation of the costs of improvement down supply chains to fishers (Bellchambers et al. 2016)(Roheim et al. 2018)(Barr et al. 2019)(Stoll et al. 2019).

To address these limitations, and to maximize the success of FIPs, Ocean Outcomes (O2), SmartFish AC, and Conservation International have broadened the FIP model beyond environmental considerations to include fisheries' social and financial capacity dimensions. We believe that adopting this triple impact approach will improve the likelihood of achieving durable improvements that benefit all fisheries stakeholders. It will also better align improvement efforts with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; UN General Assembly 2015), international human rights frameworks (i.e. UN Guiding Principles on Businesses and Human Rights; ILO C188), and other international instruments (i.e. FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries). There is strong precedent for triple impact approaches in the SDGs and across production sectors including agriculture, forestry and fisheries (Asche et al. 2018).

The triple impact framework described in this document has been developed to evaluate needs, plan improvements, and monitor and publicly report progress against the environmental, social and financial dimensions of sustainability. The framework builds off – and expands on – the fundamental strengths of the traditional FIP model, including its multi stakeholder and public approaches. It should, therefore, be a familiar model for current FIP stakeholders and implementers.

The rationale for broadening the traditional environmentally focused FIP model is simple: seafood markets provide some of the strongest and most accessible leverage in marine systems and are thus attractive for effecting change. FIPs were designed to apply this leverage to improve fisheries' environmental performance. However, because fisheries are complex socio-ecological systems, efforts to improve environmental performance alone can have social and financial consequences that have caused FIPs to stall, backslide and even fail (CEA 2020)(Thomas et al.; Ross Strategic 2020). Put another way, reducing social risk and maximizing financial viability are essential to ensuring the environmental improvements that many FIPs seek.

Of course, assessing and improving two additional dimensions – social and financial – adds up-front costs to the improvement process. This can be offset, however, by reduced likelihood that FIPs will stall or fail, and the improved durability of FIPs which reach implementation stages.

Overview of the assessment tools

The Triple Impact Evaluation Framework is based on three tools – the Environmental Rapid Assessment (ERA), Social Rapid Assessment (SRA) and Financial Capacity Rapid Assessment (FRA). These tools were developed to efficiently and affordably evaluate environmental, social and financial capacity performance of seafood enterprises and the wild capture fisheries upon which they depend. Each is based on international standards and systems – described in more detail below – and they are subject to updates and ongoing development.

Broadly speaking, the three tools were developed with the following objectives in mind:

- To define capacity or performance indicators suitable for assessing risk in key areas of environmental, social and financial performance;
- To establish reliable benchmarks against which future improvements can be measured; and,
- To provide a means to rapidly diagnose where improvements are possible or necessary.

The process for implementing the framework is to:

1. Conduct an initial screening of the seafood enterprise and its associated fisheries;
2. Assess social, financial and environmental performance against credible metrics; and,
3. Based on assessment results, develop and sequence recommendations for achieving financial, social, and environmental improvement.

We recommend assessing performance across all three dimensions because this will enable stakeholders to reduce the risks and costs associated with implementation and contribute to the durability of improvement. This triple impact assessment should ideally be conducted prior to initiating new FIPs to optimize the sequencing of improvement (see Sequencing, below). However, for existing FIPs that have focused only on the environmental dimension, a post hoc addition of social and financial capacity assessments is still recommended.

An agnostic approach

Although we have developed tools specifically for use with the Triple Impact Framework, the framework can also be used with alternatives; implementers should choose the assessment tools most relevant and useful for their contexts. However, in accordance with best practice, we recommend that implementers use tools for assessing environmental and social performance that meet international standards. The [GSSI benchmark](#), for example, represents a solid international reference for fisheries' environmental performance, and an analogous system is in development for social performance in the Social Risk Assessment Tool.

Scope

This Framework and the ERA, SRA and FRA tools associated with it can be used to rapidly assess any entity engaged in commercial fishing or processing, from small to large. The framework should be useful for evaluating and driving improvement of non-FIP fisheries as well. However, the framework is not intended for use with recreational fisheries, subsistence fisheries or aquaculture operations, though the underlying tools could be used for them.

Primary users

We anticipate that the primary users of this evaluation framework will be FIP implementers. However, in cases where external investment is being sought for fisheries improvement, the

framework can also help stakeholders (including project developers), investors and funders understand potential risk areas, before committing resources. Such risk areas might include, for example, fish stock status, labor conditions and organizational capacity of the seafood and/or fishing enterprise.

Assessor qualifications and experience

Assessments should be conducted by a team of assessors with the following qualifications and experience:

- Environmental assessors should have training in fisheries science and experience in evaluating fisheries against sustainability standards, particularly the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard. The FisheryProgress.org [FIP consultant criteria](#) identify key characteristics for assessors.
- Social assessors should have research experience in the social sciences, including human-rights and wellbeing protocols, and should utilize available trainings for specific assessment tools. The assessment of social responsibility principles, components and indicators will in some cases require outsourcing or partnerships between human-rights and development groups. The assessing team should also strive to use a worker-driven approach to assessing labor conditions, engaging local frontline organizations that represent fishers and their rights and interests.
- Financial capacity assessors should have training in business and familiarity with the evaluation of creditworthiness of enterprises. It is also desirable for assessors to be familiar with seafood supply chains.

Assessors of each dimension should be knowledgeable about techniques for auditing quality management systems (e.g. [ISO 9000](#); [ISO 19011](#)) and should be competent at conducting document reviews.

Environmental rapid assessment (ERA)

The Environmental Rapid Assessment (ERA) is a tool for rapidly and affordably evaluating the environmental sustainability of wild capture fisheries. Based on international standards and best practices, it was co-developed by Ocean Outcomes, World Wildlife Fund and Sustainable Fisheries Partnership under the Oceans Seafood and Markets Initiative (OSMI). The ERA provides a representative – though slightly conservative – estimate of performance against the MSC standard at substantially reduced effort and cost. These savings can be invested in undertaking improvements, and implementers can subsequently undertake full MSC assessment or request evaluation against the Seafood Watch standard once improvement has progressed and stakeholders are perhaps more willing and able to invest.

The ERA methodology is publicly available on FisheryProgress.org (listed as the [Rapid Assessment Tool](#)) and can serve as a needs assessment for a basic FIP. The ERA draws heavily on concepts/definitions from the MSC and Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch (MBA SFW) standards, specifically the MSC Fisheries Standard Version 2.01 and Fisheries Certification Requirements Version 2.1 (MSC FS v2.01, MSC FCR v2.1) and the MBA SFW Standard for Fisheries Version 3.2 (SFW FS v3.2). A version with additional scoring granularity below the SG60 level, which draws on guidance for lower scoring ranges developed for the Certification and Ratings Group (MRAG 2017), is currently undergoing development and testing.

Assessors evaluate indicators under three main principles, consistent with the structure of the MSC Fisheries Standard: (1) Status of Target Stock(s), (2) Ecosystem Impacts, and (3) Management.

Social responsibility assessment (SRA)

The [Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector \(SRA\)](#) is a diagnostic or rapid assessment tool for assessing risk of social issues, identifying areas in need of improvement, and informing the development of a FIP workplan that includes social improvement. Used by FisheryProgress.org as its social risk assessment tool, the SRA was built on the Monterey Framework, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries, and other relevant protocols and frameworks within the fields of human rights, natural resource management and development. The Monterey Framework was co-created by numerous stakeholders (Kittinger et al 2017) and encompasses the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the eight ILO fundamental conventions and the ILO Work in Fishing Convention. In line with the UN Guiding Principles, the Social Responsibility Assessment Tool serves to operationalize Principle 15, which calls for companies to undertake human rights due diligence. Two key resources used in the creation of the SRA include the Framework on Social Responsibility for the Seafood Sector developed by the Certification and Ratings Collaboration social sub-committee (Opal et al 2018) and the ERA methodology.

The SRA covers three main principles: (1) Protect human rights, dignity and access to resources; (2) Ensure equality and equitable opportunity to benefit; and (3) Improve food, nutrition and livelihood security. Each social responsibility principle comprises a set of components, performance indicators (PIs) and scoring guideposts (SGs).

Financial rapid assessment (FRA)

The [Financial Rapid Assessment \(FRA\)](#) is a globally applicable tool designed to rapidly assess the business capacity of seafood enterprises. To better understand the capacity of fisheries and seafood enterprises, Wilderness Markets and SmartFish AC developed protocols for assessing fisheries' investability for the World Bank and Mexican fishing coops' business, organizational, and operational performance, respectively. We combined these to produce the FRA because if a fishing enterprise at the core of a FIP has unidentified capacity gaps, these represent important risks. Assessing those risks and systematically improving to address them should improve the effectiveness and investability of both the enterprise and the FIP.

Assessors evaluate capacity indicators within three principles: (1) Organizational Capacity, (2) Operational Capacity, and (3) Current Market Position. These principles provide insight about the ability of the organization to perform as a fishing and/or seafood business and about their position relative to their competitors. The tool uses basic tenets of organizational capacity development, similar to [assessments from the FAO](#) and [USAID](#) as well as [the foundations of credit analysis](#) that a lender would use to evaluate an enterprise.

At the heart of the methodology is a survey questionnaire. It is comprised of three types of questions: 1) "scoring questions," intended to elicit responses that will feed directly into Capacity Indicator (CI) scores; 2) "information questions," designed to gather background information about the Seafood Enterprise; and 3) "decision questions," to prompt a decision point in the survey process.

Performance and capacity indicators

The 67 performance and capacity indicators for all three assessment tools are shown in Table 1. These indicators were designed to be complementary. However, since assessing all of them may be time and cost prohibitive, we have identified a subset of indicators (marked with an asterisk) that should be prioritized during initial scoping of a fishery enterprise and its associated

Triple Impact Fisheries Evaluation Framework - Version 1.0

fishery or fisheries. These priority indicators are the most likely to have a pronounced role in project feasibility, affecting the potential for positive triple impact outcomes.

Table 1. Description of indicators used within the ERA (green rows), SRA (blue rows) and FRA (yellow rows). Priority indicators are marked with an asterisk.

Principle	Component	Indicator #	Indicator description
1. Status of target stock(s)	Outcome	1.1.1	Stock status outcome*
		1.1.2	Stock rebuilding outcome
	Management	1.2.1	Harvest strategy*
		1.2.2	Harvest control rules
		1.2.3	Information and monitoring*
2. Ecosystem impacts	Other species	2.2.3	Other species information*
		2.2.1	Other species outcome*
		2.2.2	Other species management
	ETP species	2.3.3	ETP species information*
		2.3.1	ETP species outcome*
		2.3.2	ETP species management
	Habitats	2.4.3	Habitats information*
		2.4.1	Habitats outcome*
		2.4.2	Habitats management
	Ecosystem	2.5.3	Ecosystem information
2.5.1		Ecosystem outcome	
2.5.2		Ecosystem management	
3. Management	Governance & policy	3.1.1	Legal and customary framework*
		3.1.2	Consultation, roles and responsibilities*
		3.1.3	Long term objectives
	Fishery specific management system	3.2.1	Fishery-specific objectives*
		3.2.2	Decision-making processes*
		3.2.3	Compliance and enforcement*
		3.2.4	Management performance evaluation
1. Protect human rights, dignity and access to resources	1.1 Human and labor rights	1.1.1	Abuse and harassment
		1.1.2	Human trafficking and forced labor, debt bondage*
		1.1.3	Child labor*
		1.1.4	Freedom of association and collective bargaining*
		1.1.5	Earnings and benefits
		1.1.6	Adequate rest

Triple Impact Fisheries Evaluation Framework - Version 1.0

		1.1.7	Access to basic services
		1.1.8	Occupational safety*
		1.1.9	Medical response*
	1.2 Access Rights	1.2.1	Customary resource use rights
		1.2.2	Corporate responsibility and transparency
2. Ensure equality and equitable opportunity to benefit	2.1 Equality	2.1.1	Grievance reporting and access to remedy*
		2.1.2	Stakeholder participation and collaborative management*
	2.2 Equity	2.2.1	Equitable opportunity to benefit
		2.2.2	Discrimination
3. Improve food, nutrition, and livelihood security	3.1 Food and nutrition security	3.1.1	Food and nutrition security*
		3.1.2	Healthcare
		3.1.3	Education
	3.2 Livelihood security	3.2.1	Benefits to and within community
		3.2.2	Economic value retention*
		3.2.3	Long term profitability and future workforce*
		3.2.4	Economic flexibility and autonomy*
		3.2.5	Livelihood security*
3.2.6	Fuel resource efficiency		
1. Organizational capacity		1.1	Legal establishment*
		1.2	Regulatory compliance*
		1.3	Organizational structure*
		1.4	Performance history
		1.5	Business planning
		1.6	Revenue model*
		1.7	Accounting
		1.8	Production records
		1.9	Distribution of costs and benefits*
		1.10	Market research
2. Operational capacity		2.1	Infrastructure*
		2.2	Funding
		2.3	Processing
		2.4	Product quality and safety
		2.5	Cold chain
3. Current market position		3.1	Market analysis
		3.2	Competition
		3.3	Key product attributes

Scoring

Assessors score multiple indicators grouped within principles. For each indicator, the methodology defines performance thresholds or ‘scoring guideposts’ (SGs) at three levels: SG60, SG80 and SG100 (see Figure 1). Performance levels are progressive, such that SG60 represents a threshold for the minimum acceptable level of performance, below which performance is high risk, SG100 represents maximal performance and SG80 is a threshold between medium and low risk.

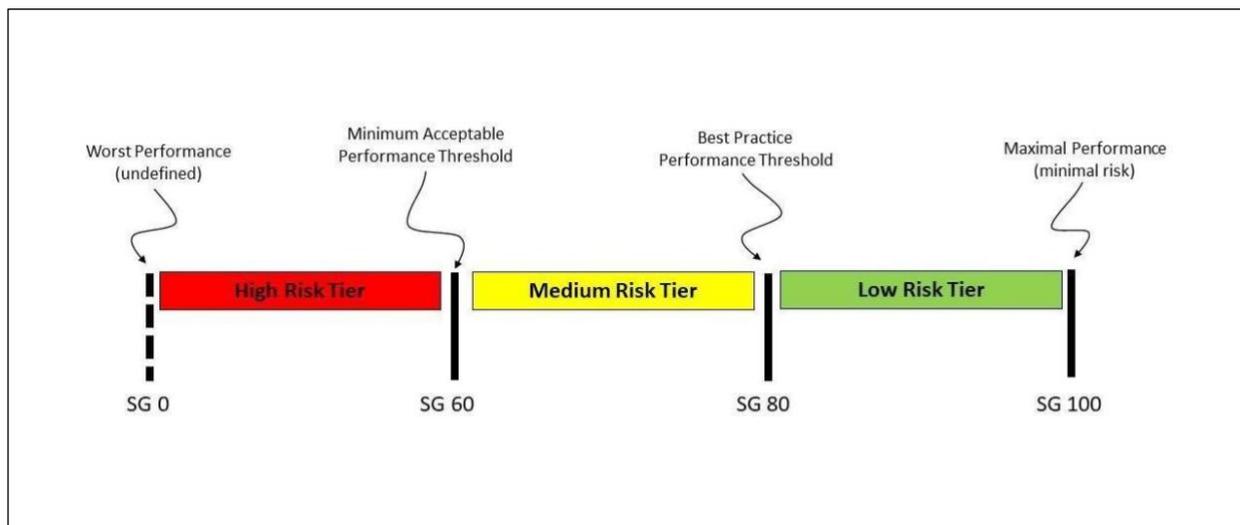


Figure 1. Performance thresholds and risk tiers.

The assessment tools assume that risk is negatively related to improvement project viability. That is, a higher performance level and/or greater business capacity corresponds to a lower risk level. Along a continuum of performance from low to high, our guideposts delineate three categories of performance that correspond to decreasing risk levels. Red coloring (< SG60) indicates that performance falls below the minimum acceptable threshold and it is therefore the highest risk tier. Yellow coloring (between SG60 and SG80) indicates that performance is above the minimum acceptable threshold but does not meet best practice. Yellow is the medium risk tier. Green coloring (SG80 level or higher) indicates that performance meets or exceeds best practice and is the lowest risk tier.

Each assessment tool has specific instructions for documentation. Whenever written rationales for scores are required, they should follow the language of the scoring guideposts where possible, and may be supported by data or figures if appropriate. For benchmarking and monitoring purposes, it is important to specify the nature of the deficiency(ies) which triggered a “high risk” score. Nonetheless, because these are rapid assessments, a concise description should suffice in most cases.

Overview of the Triple Impact FIP process

Definition

We consider that a FIP can be considered as triple impact if it:

- Meets the Conservation Alliance for Sustainable Seafood [Guidelines for Supporting FIPs](#);
- AND its environmental, social and financial capacity performance has been assessed;

- AND a workplan has been developed and published that includes milestones and steps to improve in each impact dimension;
- AND progress across all three dimensions is being tracked and publicly reported on a regular basis per the FIP Guidelines.

Process

The triple impact FIP process builds on that of a conventional FIP, closely following the FIP Guidelines broadening them to incorporate social and financial capacity performance to all stages and aspects of the FIP process. Developing a triple impact FIP requires certain modifications to those specified in the FIP Guidelines (See Table 2). Detailed below, these include: defining the Unit of Assessment, conducting a value chain analysis, assessing social and financial capacity performance (in addition to environmental), producing an integrated workplan, producing an integrated budget, reporting progress on each dimension, and sequencing and prioritizing implementation across the three dimensions.

Table 2. Developing a triple impact FIP requires changes (last column) to the conventional FIP activities (middle column) detailed in the Guidelines for Supporting FIPs. Modifications are shown in italics, and additions as new rows, both in the last column.

*integrated refers to scoping document, workplan and budget that integrate the three sustainability dimensions.

Stage	Conventional FIP	Triple Impact FIP
Stage 0 Identification	Supply chain analysis	Conduct <i>value chain</i> analysis
		Define Unit(s) of assessment for each dimension
Stage 1 Development	Assess environmental performance	
		Assess social performance
		Assess financial performance
	Produce scoping document	Produce <i>integrated*</i> scoping document
	Map and engage stakeholders	
Stage 2 Launch	Confirm participants	
	Convene participants	
	Develop workplan	Develop <i>integrated*</i> workplan
		Prioritize and sequence activities across three dimensions
	Develop budget	Develop <i>integrated*</i> budget
	Publish workplan	Publish <i>integrated*</i> workplan
Stage 3 Implementation	Implement actions	Implement actions <i>across each dimension</i>
	Track and report progress	Track and report <i>progress of each dimension</i>
	Adapt actions as needed	

Unit of Assessment

The first step for using the Framework is to define the Unit of Assessment (UoA), which will vary by project and may differ by the type of assessment. For environmental assessments, the UoA is typically defined by the target stock(s) combined with the fishing method/gear and practice (including vessel type/s) pursuing that stock. In some fisheries, the UoA may be further defined based on the specific fishing seasons and/or areas. For financial and social assessments, the UoA is based on social levels or scales of organization relevant to the fishery or supply chain under consideration. This could include 1) the production sector, 2) pre-processing sector, 3) processing sector, 4) distribution sector, or any combination of these.

For triple impact projects, we recommend defining a fundamental UoA based on the financial/social UoA, and then characterizing the UoA further based on the fishery or fisheries of interest. The UoA will be based on some combination of the following:

- Seafood enterprise or investable business entity, such as a fishery association or cooperative, that is at least notionally competent and authorized to conduct business activities on behalf of itself, its members and/or participants;
- Community that depends on the fishery for livelihoods;
- Fishery target species (may be multiple);
- Fishing area and/or exclusive economic zone (EEZ);
- Gear type (may be multiple);
- Vessel type and size, number thereof; and,
- Management authority (the regulatory authority with fishing management responsibilities).

Discrepancies in UoAs could arise. For example, one seafood enterprise may simultaneously participate in multiple fisheries, or conversely, a single fishery may be prosecuted by numerous and distinct seafood enterprises. Thus, some expert judgment, particularly from local stakeholders, will likely be needed to define the UoA. Additional sources of information, such as a stakeholder mapping exercise, may also be helpful.

Value chain analysis

At FIP identification stage (Stage 0) we recommend a [value chain analysis](#) be conducted (instead of a supply chain analysis) to understand not just who trades and manages the fishery but also who is affected by the fishery and how.

Conduct triple impact assessment

At Stage 1 (FIP Identification), assessments should be made of social and financial capacity performance and environmental performance, along with the production of a triple impact scoping document. This document should include a mapping of the full range of stakeholders impacted by the project and those who have roles in addressing social and financial as well as environmental challenges in the fishery. Ideally the assessment should cover all 67 indicators. However, if resources are limited, we suggest proceeding with the priority indicators plus other indicators that stakeholders identify as needs or areas of high risk.

As identified in the scoring section, each assessment tool has specific instructions for documentation, which include writing a draft report to be shared with stakeholders and incorporating stakeholder feedback into final drafts that are also shared.

Develop an integrated project workplan

The next step within the triple impact framework is to develop a FIP workplan. The first step in this process is to validate the assessments with stakeholders, a key success factor for ensuring their ownership of the improvement objectives. After determining objectives for the FIP a workplan should be developed in collaboration with key stakeholders including the seafood enterprise, other relevant industry groups within the supply chain, government management bodies and non-profit organizations. Integrating work across the three sustainability dimensions, this workplan should be a living document, subject to ongoing adaptation, that aims to address deficiencies identified in the assessment.

There is some overlap between assessment indicators in categories that they address, which allows for efficiencies in workplan development. Similarly, it is possible to develop action items that address issues across more than one domain. Table 3 lists broad improvement categories across triple impact areas and references the potential overlap with the UN SDGs. These improvement categories are also used in the [budget template](#) and the [indicators mapping](#) worksheets.

Table 3. Improvement categories and types of actions that can be taken to address deficiencies.

Improvement category	Actions for addressing	SDG indicator(s)
Information and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build technical capacity • Build administrative / operational capacity • Purchase equipment • Collaborate with authorities • Conduct research / analysis 	
Policy development and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build technical capacity • Build administrative / operational capacity • Collaborate with authorities • Conduct research / analysis • Develop policies and procedures • Strengthen local leadership 	14.2, 14.4
Outcomes – environmental and social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct research / analysis • Collaborate with authorities • Develop policies and procedures • Increase access to services 	5.1,14.2
Seafood enterprise sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build administrative / operational capacity • Strengthen local leadership • Collaborate with authorities • Develop policies and procedures • Increase access to services 	5.1, 5.5, 8.3, 9.3.1,* 14.2.1, 14.4.1, 14.7.1

**Limited*

Develop an integrated project budget

A thorough budget should be developed at the outset of the project, to ensure transparency and understanding amongst stakeholders regarding the costs involved. We have developed a [budget template \(under development\)](#) based on our pilots that implementers can use or adapt according to their needs.

Report progress on each dimension

To build transparency and trust with stakeholders, Triple Impact FIPs should report progress to stakeholders on a regular basis using FisheryProgress.org. Reporting requirements for FisheryProgress.org are [detailed on their website](#).

At this time, FisheryProgress.org provides a standardized reporting framework for environmental indicators and an opportunity for FIPs to list other impacts, such as traceability initiatives and roundtable participation. FIPs must report progress against their workplan every

six months, and must update their indicator scores annually. A [social policy for FIPs is under development](#), and the standardized reporting framework will be expanded to include social indicators sometime in 2021.

FisheryProgress.org does not yet include a dedicated space for reporting on financial capacity indicators, but there are discussions underway for creating space on the website to allow for it. In contrast to social and environmental reporting, however, we recommend that financial capacity reporting would reveal less detailed information publicly in order to protect sensitive business information. We draw this distinction in reporting business performance to avoid revealing sensitive information that might undermine the competitiveness of seafood enterprises. We recommend that once the initial financial capacity assessment is complete, implementers would publicly state that they have completed a set of discrete tasks:

- a) a financial capacity assessment was conducted,
- b) a workplan was created to address key capacity challenges,
- c) all stakeholders were informed of the assessment results and workplan, and
- d) progress is reported to stakeholders at the same frequency as the other two dimensions (environmental and social, every six months).

As recommended in the FRA tool, implementers should request fishery enterprise representatives to flag any information in the assessment they feel should be kept in confidence.

Sequencing and prioritization

Within the triple impact framework, sequencing and prioritization of improvement actions is very important. For example, fishing effort and harvests should be effectively managed (or on a clear pathway to effectiveness) before implementation of business improvements that increase catch value because this almost universally triggers increased fishing effort. Otherwise, there is a high risk that overfishing will occur. Accordingly, we recommend that a certain base level of environmental and social performance be met before developing and implementing private sector, return-generating investments. This may mean that some environmental and social improvements will need to be carried out in parallel with, if not prior to, certain financial performance improvements.

As with all FIPs, engagement with stakeholders, including government, is critical for achieving lasting project outcomes and should be a priority. For triple impact projects, one of the key stakeholders is the fishery enterprise, as the enterprise will play a critical role in executing the recommended strategies and improvements. Identification of a suitable enterprise, and supporting local leadership within that enterprise, will be an important part of the triple impact process.

If business-related improvements are implemented in an appropriately structured manner, along with recommended environmental and social interventions, they should result in higher operational efficiencies and improved market pricing. The goal of this triple impact evaluation framework is to produce a holistic assessment that will serve as the basis for developing a robust improvement project that will foster the long-term viability of the fishery by protecting fish stocks and ecosystem health, as well as human rights and livelihoods, while positively impacting the incomes of participating fishers.

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