

Improving accessibility to the Marine Stewardship Council's certification and ecolabelling programme.

Michael Marriott, Marine Stewardship Council, Cape Town, South Africa, [michael.marriott@msc.org](mailto:michael.marriott@msc.org)

Andrew Kenneth Gordon, Marine Stewardship Council, Cape Town, South Africa, [andrew.gordon@msc.org](mailto:andrew.gordon@msc.org) (presenting author)

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## Background

Fisheries of the Global South are vital to food security, livelihoods and economic development, and so it is critical they are managed sustainably. Yet research indicates that these fisheries appear to be worsening in terms of fleet overcapacity, production per unit of effort and stock status. The implications are global as approximately half of the world's seafood production is from these developing countries.

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) operates the world's leading seafood certification and ecolabelling programme. Fisheries volunteer to be independently audited against the science-based Fisheries Standard and, if they pass, are considered to be operating sustainably. Approximately 10% of the fisheries in the MSC programme are from the Global South. By improving accessibility for fisheries to engage in the MSC programme, the MSC can play a role in improving the management of fisheries operating in the Global South.

## Method

The MSC has developed a number of tools and introduced a range of mechanisms aimed at improving the access of fisheries from the Global South to the MSC programme. This has created pathways for fisheries to gradually work toward environmental sustainability, using the MSC Fisheries Standard as the route map.

The MSC Capacity Building Programme is designed to equip a wide range of stakeholders (fisheries management authorities, non-governmental organisations, fishers and commercial seafood industry) with the knowledge and skills required to implement successful Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs). An additional objective is to enable fisheries scientists and experts located in the Global South to increase their knowledge and understanding of the MSC Fisheries Standard.

Accompanying fishery improvement tools have also been developed and include Pre-assessment Templates, Fishery Improvement Action Plans, and the Benchmarking and Tracking Tool. Together, these assets provide a framework for improvement and are particularly useful for small-scale fisheries in the Global South.

Funding, in the past through the MSC's Global Fisheries Sustainability Fund, has supported scientific research and projects in fisheries worldwide. Going forward, the MSC's new Ocean Sustainability Fund will support fisheries on their pathway to sustainability and invest in new scientific research. In particular, the In Transition to MSC Programme will support credible FIPs as they make progress toward achieving MSC certification.

The MSC Fisheries Standard is designed to be accessible to all types of fisheries. However, its strong requirement for quantitative data can be a barrier to some, including small-scale and artisanal fisheries and those without access to stock assessments. To address this challenge, the MSC has developed a set of precautionary risk-based indicators for the assessment of data-deficient fisheries – entitled the Risk Based Framework (RBF).

## Results

In the Global South the Capacity Building Programme has been implemented in Tanzania, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Cameroon, Namibia, Senegal, India, Thailand, Indonesia, Mexico and Peru. Fishery improvement tools have been applied in Madagascar, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique South Africa, Namibia, Senegal, Mauritania, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Maldives, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Suriname and Mexico. The Risk Based Framework has enabled 17 fisheries from the Global South to access the MSC Fisheries Standard. The Global Fisheries Sustainability Fund has provided support for fisheries related research projects in Madagascar, Kenya, Tanzania, Chile, Indonesia, Suriname and Vietnam.

## Conclusion

Prior to 2010 there were fewer than five MSC certified fisheries from the Global South. Following the development of the MSC's accessibility tools and mechanisms, the number of MSC certified fisheries from the Global South has increased steadily, numbering 36 at the end of 2018, with 18 additional fisheries in assessment.