



# Power Dynamics in multi-stakeholder processes:

A BALANCING ACT



## Colophon

### Project coordination

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### Text

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## Prologue

**What is power? Power is a multifaceted social phenomenon, at the core of human relations. 'Power over' is the ability to influence, control people or events to achieve certain outcomes. But there is also 'power within', dealing with self-confidence; 'power with', referring to the power of cooperation; and 'power to' relates to having agency, being able to create. Those with resources often have more power. Many social change initiatives nowadays assume that joint action by multiple stakeholders is needed for impact. In such multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs) we can see that power differences manifest themselves. It is often very difficult for less powerful actors to influence what is going on in these MSPs, or to shift power dynamics in their favour.**

This publication is a result of the Thematic Learning Programme (TLP) 'Power dynamics in multi-stakeholder processes' (2011–2012) in which seven Dutch development NGOs asked themselves how they could deal with these power dynamics. This is important, because MSPs deal with issues in complex contexts: land conflicts, natural resource conflicts or farmers at the bottom of the value chain. MSP processes are not always harmonious and not everybody is able to have the same level of stakes and representation at the table. This TLP aimed to draw lessons for the different organizations involved, and to enable them to deal better with power dynamics in MSPs.

A multi-stakeholder process in this collaborative learning journey is defined as: "A process of interactive learning, empowerment and collaborative governance that enables stakeholders with common longer term objectives, but different interests, to be collectively innovative and resilient when faced with emerging risks, crises and opportunities of a complex and changing environment."

If we are to analyse power in multi-stakeholder settings jointly with partners who are actors in these processes, it is evident that this can't be a clean theoretical exercise. Engagement must involve our own feelings, perceptions and attitudes about our own power. Any inquiry should be sensitive to power. In recent years, several methodologies and tools have been developed to analyze power dynamics in collaborative settings. These include the PowerPack [www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/powerpack-web-version-2011.pdf](http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/powerpack-web-version-2011.pdf) of IDS (based on work around the Power Cube), the Power Tools resource box [www.policy-powertools.org/index.html](http://www.policy-powertools.org/index.html) from IIED, and the Political Analytical Tool [www.dlprog.org](http://www.dlprog.org) of the Developmental Leadership Program. We have used, and built upon, these resources and developed a detailed analytical framework (see chapter – methodological framework), and tested specific tools (see insight #3). This has led to five insights, which are presented in this e-publication. We invite you to follow us on this journey, and hope that our insights developed over the last two years are of help to you.

### Setting the scene

By way of introducing the topic, we interviewed two people from the external reference group on the importance of dealing with power in MSPs. Professor David Millar from the University of Development Studies in Ghana refers to policy discussions in Ghana related to gold mining and oil drilling where MSPs are important to give voice to the voiceless. Jethro Pettit from IDS Sussex explains action research on power dynamics and clarifies this with an example from Kenya, linked to a port development project affecting different ethnic communities.

### **Thank you!**

We have enjoyed editing this e-publication and are still surprised by the richness of the process and the insights gained. We thank all fellow travellers in this journey that contributed at specific times to the creative confusion. Hettie Walters of ICCO, Willem Elbers of CIDIN and Lucia Helsloot of Cordaid commented on earlier texts. Even though our names are listed here as editors, this e-publication does not have our copyright, but a copy-left statement. We thank all researchers, conveners, and members of the external reference group. We thank Kees-Jan Mulder and Walid Rhord, who made the films. We also thank Ada Breedveld, an Amsterdam based artist who kindly provided us with her digital images of her paintings that were selected to illustrate the insights. And we thank PSO. With the trust and (financial) support of PSO, we have been able to co-create practical understandings of power dynamics in MSPs.

Wim Hiemstra, ETC Foundation  
*Coordinator Power dynamics in MSPs*

Herman Brouwer & Simone van Vugt, Wageningen UR-CDI  
*Methodological support Power dynamics in MSPs*



## Introduction

**A balancing act. This metaphor emerged during the Thematic Learning Programme (TLP) 'Strategically dealing with power dynamics in Multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs)'. To deal with power involves delicate processes: mediating interests with influence, mediating power with trust and making hidden power visible. In order to empower the least influential in MSPs, facilitators need to know the key actors, their resources, the spaces and rules of engagement, the visible and hidden expressions of power. Actually, all stakeholders are cord dancers!**

The seven convening Dutch development organizations of this TLP, i.e. Both Ends, CORDAID, ETC Foundation, Fair Trade Original, ICCO and WASTE, with methodological support from Wageningen UR-CDI<sup>1</sup>, realize that globalization has entangled the stakes and interests of actors and institutions across borders, across sectors, and across levels. The climate crisis, financial crisis and food crisis confirm that our 21st century reality is one of interconnected people and ecosystems, and the consequent complexity and multi-layered nature of issues. In recent decades, multi-stakeholder processes are promoted to deal with this complexity.

### **Abused, overruled, excluded?**

MSP advocates often argue that because of interdependence of stakeholders in solving complex issues at stake, MSPs create trust-based relations that enable the empowerment and active participation of all. However, in the experience of the Dutch organizations and their southern partners, 'putting the right people in one room' does not automatically generate an inclusive and equitable process, nor automatically produce more effective and sustainable solutions. In many contexts, the distribution of power, capacity and resources is generally imbalanced. Failure to recognize the power imbalances and the course of power dynamics before and during the engagement in an MSP, and to strategically deal with them, can result in some stakeholders dominating others and less powerful stakeholders being abused, overruled or excluded.

### **Dealing with power dynamics**

On the other hand, there are cases where disadvantaged stakeholders who participate in MSPs are quite successful in transforming power relations, see e.g. Edmund and Wollenberg, 'Disadvantaged groups in multi-stakeholder negotiations', [www.cbnrm.net/pdf/edmunds\\_d\\_001.pdf](http://www.cbnrm.net/pdf/edmunds_d_001.pdf). This demonstrates the need for a thorough understanding of power dynamics in MSPs.

The four central learning questions agreed upon by the seven convening organizations are:

1. How can local, or 'beneficiary' organizations, which are usually less powerful stakeholders, be empowered to operate strategically in a multi-stakeholder setting?
2. How can power differences between stakeholders be taken into account in the development of multi-stakeholder cooperative processes in order to ensure effective participation of the weaker/ smaller/ less powerful stakeholders?
3. Given the growing involvement of local organizations in MSPs, what are the implications for relationships between local CSO and Northern agencies?
4. How should Northern agencies deal with power imbalances when participating in or being related to MSPs?

## Action research

In order to answer these 4 questions, the convening organizations each proposed 2 learning sites. Here, action researchers were engaged in MSPs as relative outside facilitators to support the stakeholders in analyzing their own process and map out the power relations and power dynamics. At the global level, there is a learning platform, <http://thechangealliance.ning.com/> where action researchers and convening organizations share their experiences and connect to experience and learning with others.

<i>Action research &amp; location</i>	<i>Issue</i>
<i>Both Ends: Palm Oil, Indonesia</i>	<i>Participatory Land use planning</i>
<i>Both Ends: Round Table Sustainable Palm Oil, international</i>	<i>Capacity building for weak stakeholders in Dispute Settlement Facility</i>
<i>Fair Trade Original: Fair trade citrus value chain, Ghana</i>	<i>Dealing with conflicting interests of stakeholders in fair trade value chains</i>
<i>Fair Trade Original: Fair Trade Assessments, international</i>	<i>Commitment and follow up of stakeholders in fair trade value chains</i>
<i>ICCO: women and communities in cooperative societies, Guatemala</i>	<i>The influence of communities (especially women) in forestry programmes</i>
<i>ICCO: Seaweed value chain, Philippines</i>	<i>The influence of producers and other stakeholders in value chain programmes</i>
<i>ETC Foundation: Gold mining industry, Ghana</i>	<i>Use of Biocultural Community Protocols to deal with gold mining affecting community livelihoods</i>
<i>ETC Foundation: Economic infrastructure, Kenya</i>	<i>Use of Biocultural Community Protocols to deal with large scale economic development affecting community livelihoods</i>
<i>Cordaid: Oils spill and gas flaring, Nigeria</i>	<i>Use of Alternative funding mechanisms</i>
<i>Cordaid National Home Based Care Alliance, Malawi</i>	<i>Commitment and capacity in home based health care programs</i>
<i>Waste: Sanitation sector, 2 locations, Malawi</i>	<i>Franchise concepts in Sanitation Services</i>

## Steps undertaken

In the implementation of this TLP from 2011–2012, the following steps have been undertaken:

- Discussion and **design of the TLP** by the Dutch conveners
- **Selection of the cases** and of the action researchers by Dutch conveners and their local counterparts
- **Inception workshop** of conveners, academia and action researchers to agree on a **methodological framework**
- Development of **toolbox** by WUR–CDI
- **Action research** in 12 MSPs (actual or emerging MSPs) in 8 countries
- **E-conference** and webinars to exchange, discuss and digest our interim findings
- **Documentation** of findings by action researchers
- **Learning event** to present and discuss the experiences
- **E-publication**

### **Academic support**

An expert reference group, consisting of professor David Millar (University of Development Studies, Ghana), Jethro Pettit (Institute of Development studies, University of Sussex), Willem Elbers (CIDIN, Radboud University, Nijmegen) and Art de Wulf (Wageningen UR, Public Administration and Policy Department) joined in design of the action research, the e-conference and the Learning event.

\*) The six Dutch development organizations are member of PSO (a Dutch association of 57 members aiming to support capacity strengthening in Southern societies) and also member of the Change Alliance, a global network of organizations that aim to improve conditions and capacities for effective multi-stakeholder processes. Wageningen UR-CDI hosts the secretariat of the Change Alliance. Many of the links included in this publication lead to the limited-access site of the Change Alliance, <http://thechangealliance.ning.com>. Viewing content requires you to create an account and login.



# Methodological framework and toolbox

Surprisingly, MSP theory so far has not given much attention to the power opportunities and strategies of disadvantaged stakeholders. However, as the number of conflict-ridden MSPs increases in an increasingly complex world, more scholars come to analyze the issue of exclusion, inequality and power abuse. This has resulted in a debate between those who hold a 'dialogue vision' on MSPs and those who have a 'power relations vision'. This TLP tried to transcend the current either-or approach to the question whether disadvantaged stakeholders should participate in MSPs. We believe that the participation of disadvantaged stakeholders depends on the conditions of the MSP, the capacities of the stakeholders and facilitators of MSPs to understand and deal with power dynamics. These aspects guided the methodological framework.

## The two visions on power in MSP

In the 'dialogue vision', an open dialogue with willing participants will produce the best possible, rational solution for all. Conflicts are mainly the result of miscommunication. Designers and facilitators of MSPs can prevent this by enabling an open dialogue through the creation of a level playing field for all stakeholders. Their focus should be on methods to create neutral and objective conditions for stakeholder interaction and joint learning in MSPs.

The 'power relations vision' contests the idea that a level playing field is possible, as power is the foundation of what MSPs are: a space to express power relations. In such a space, weaker stakeholders are at a disadvantage: participation exposes them to the risk of being overruled, manipulated or outvoted by other stakeholders. A radical conclusion from this argument would be for marginalized stakeholders to avoid MSPs altogether, social movement leaders often argue that rather than participating in 'invited' spaces, marginalized communities can gain much more from building solidarity networks and using a social movement to demand space.

## Combining two visions: benefit depends on conditions

This TLP tried to transcend this either-or debate and calls for analyses that recognize the importance of power positions, but also recognize people's capacities to change these, as well as the role of facilitation. We wanted to move beyond a static definition of power and capture the dynamics of power relations, as well as the capacity of actors to change these dynamics. We have assumed that this broader definition could give us more options to improve the outcomes of MSPs for disadvantaged stakeholders.

We argue that less powerful stakeholders can gain from participation, provided certain conditions for change are met. Firstly, the MSP is transparent about the power politics at work. Secondly, the MSP creates favourable conditions, in terms of willingness – the mindset or political will of stakeholders to discuss power dynamics, understanding of power dynamics, and capacity in terms of resources, tools, supportive facilitators, clear rules of the game. As Gallopin writes (2002): "Willingness and capacity without understanding leads to wrong actions; understanding and capacity without willingness leads to cosmetic action; willingness and understanding without capacity leads to failure and potential disillusionment".

## Getting started

Each of the Dutch NGOs selected two cases. In total 12 cases were selected in eight countries. Some of the action research sites are already established MSPs, whilst in other cases communities are pushing for such a space to be created. In all sites local researchers were recruited who knew the area and issues, but did not have a direct interest in the issue or with one of the partner organisations. The coordination of action research with a diverse group of cases

and researchers demanded a balanced approach between 'letting go' and 'ensuring coherence' (link to MOPAN article: Analysing stakeholder power dynamics in MSPs: Insights from practice by Brouwer et al.).

It was essential that all local researchers together with the convenor group jointly designed the conceptual and methodological framework. During two days in November 2011 this group of 30 participants exchanged ideas, got introduced to each other's cases, received theoretical inputs and eventually agreed on 7 research questions that all cases would focus on.

### **The framework**

The framework developed for this TLP also benefitted from the insights contributed by the members of the external reference group, especially Willem Elbers and Art Dewulf. They participated in the inception meeting (November 2011) and contributed insights where power dynamics are likely to manifest themselves: actors' control over resources; resource interdependencies; the definition and framing of the problem that the MSP collaboration is addressing; the membership of the MSP; and the strategies used in response to problem. (Link to Elbers, W. & Dewulf, A, 2012 – MOPAN article). This led to a framework consisting of 7 research questions: key actors, their interests/goals, problem framing, key resources; resources interdependencies; rules for decision making; changing the decision making rules.

Our basic assumption in this TLP is that research into power in an MSP can only be done in an action research mode, i.e. by involving the key stakeholders. A small group of participants therefore translated these 7 research questions into action questions and presented these to the plenary. The framework for analysing power dynamics in MSPs was agreed upon. Action researchers were asked to consider both the research and the action questions. Yet, considering the boundaries of the TLP in terms of time and budget, the agreement was that the action researchers dealt with the questions in a practical, reflective and flexible manner.

### **The Toolbox**

An accompanying toolkit (<http://www.wageningenportals.nl/msp/resource/tools-analysing-power-multi-stakeholder-processes-menu>) for stakeholder analysis and power analysis was drafted by Wageningen – UR CDI to help the local researchers select tools for their specific situations, mostly based on existing material from various sources. This enabled the researchers to undertake stakeholder analysis with local communities and other players, followed by power analysis. Not all tools were used, and we encouraged researchers to adapt tools to their contexts – which happened in several cases.

#### **Box 1: Stakeholder and power analysis tools**

<b>Stakeholder analysis tools:</b>	<b>Power analysis tools:</b>
<i>Rich picture</i>	<i>Power cube</i>
<i>Problem tree analysis</i>	<i>Sources and positions of power</i>
<i>Interest/influence matrix</i>	<i>Expressions and faces of power</i>
<i>Stakeholder characteristics and roles matrix</i>	<i>Spaces and levels of power</i>
<i>Spiderweb network diagram</i>	<i>Power ranking</i>
<i>Fast arrangement mapping</i>	<i>Net-map (tracing power and influence in networks)</i>
<i>Stakeholder interests, roles and skills</i>	<i>Power matrix</i>
<i>Community institutional resource mapping</i>	<i>Political analytical tool</i>
<i>Institutional analysis</i>	<i>Biocultural community protocol</i>
<i>Four quadrants of change framework</i>	<i>Circle of coherence</i>
<i>Value chain mapping</i>	–

### Keeping in touch – e-conference

After the first months we felt it was essential to take stock with all local researchers again to ask whether they were on track with focusing on the 7 questions, as well as having the right understanding of their roles towards the organizations they were working with in the MSP. We asked for interim reports from all local researchers and developed a 3-week e-conference based on the common issues, initial findings, and problems encountered. We exchanged experiences, made sense of the data so far, inspired each other to proceed with new energy and zeal. We used a combination of webinars and asynchronous D-group discussions. Facilitators prepared one-page introductions once a week and helped to reflect on the inputs given. For example, we started off by asking people what type of MSP they were researching: an actual or a potential MSP? Later on, we invited reflection on the concept of power: what are key issues over which there are conflicts in your MSP, and what actions do stakeholders take to exercise power over others?

By the end of the e-conference participants requested if we could have more webinars to get deeper into specific issues. We organized three more webinars for smaller groups of participants:

1. one for researchers working with actual MSPs (mostly value chain cases);
2. one for researchers working with groups that are working towards an MSP;
3. one for researchers working in a situation where it is not clear whether an MSP may emerge.

Over 90% of the local researchers and conveners participated actively in the e-conference, usually with focused and relevant input. It was good to see that some participants stayed up late and woke up early (3:00 AM being the record) to deal with the inevitable time zones.

### Synthesizing results

After receiving the final reports in July 2012, a rough synthesis and a reflection on the results as reported by the researchers was prepared. In August 2012 the whole group of local researchers, conveners and external reference group members came together for 3 days to validate this synthesis and enrich the analysis. Finally a reflection on the learning process will take place, partly facilitated by an external evaluation team.

Methodological framework, linking research questions, action questions and tools for addressing the questions raised.

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Action questions</b>	<b>Tool</b>
<p><b>1. Who are the key actors involved?</b>  <b>Reasoning:</b> We are working in a MSP that has different actors with different degrees of power and influence. We need to understand these degrees, bases of power and the manner in which they use their power.</p>	<p><b>1. Are these the right actors? Do other actors need to join the MSP?</b></p>	<p>Rich picture; Problem tree analysis; Importance/Influence Matrix; Stakeholder Characteristics &amp; Roles Matrix; Spider web network diagram; FAM; Stakeholder Interests, Roles, Skills tool; CIRM tool; Institutional Analysis; Value Chain Mapping; Net-Map; Power Matrix; PAT</p>
<p><b>2. What are the interests/goals of the different actors?</b>            How do the different interests/goals of actors conflict with each other? (grievances)</p>	<p><b>2. How can the common interests be strengthened; how can we overcome some of the differences in interest and ways of working? What are other options available?</b></p>	<p>Rich picture; Problem tree analysis; Stakeholder Characteristics &amp; Roles Matrix; Spider web network diagram; Stakeholder Interests, Roles, Skills tool; Institutional analysis; Four Quadrants; Value Chain Mapping; Net-Map; Power Matrix; PAT; BCP; Circle of Coherence</p>

<p><b>3. How is the problem framed and by whom?</b> Whose problem is going to be solved? Who frames the problems, the questions and the objectives? <b>Reasoning:</b> Through the agenda setting capacity, power shows itself in MSPs; participatory and empowerment processes are needed to balance the levels of influence of all actors in the MSP</p>	<p><b>3. What is needed to strengthen the influence of the least influential, how can empowerment be promoted?</b></p>	<p>Rich picture; Problem tree analysis; Stakeholder Characteristics &amp; Roles Matrix; Institutional analysis; Power Matrix; BCP; Circle of Coherence</p>
<p><b>4. What are their key resources (material and non-material)?</b> How does the control over resources affect actors' ability to exercise influence?</p>	<p><b>4 &amp; 5: How can interdependence at the level of resource access and control be realized? Which capacities need/ can be strengthened, how can power within be developed to lead to power to and power with?</b></p>	<p>Rich picture; Stakeholder Characteristics &amp; Roles Matrix; Stakeholder Interests, Roles, Skills tool; CIRM tool; Value Chain Mapping; Sources and Positions of Power; Net-Map; PAT; BCP</p>
<p><b>5. What are (resource) dependencies between actors?</b> How do dependencies affect actor's ability to exercise influence? <b>Reasoning for 4 &amp; 5:</b> Different actors have different access and control over various resources: material, immaterial, political, economic, social, individual, organizational etc that determine their influence in the MSP, and their capacity to realize their interests.</p>		<p>Rich picture; Stakeholder Interests, Roles, Skills tool; CIRM tool; Power Ranking; Net-Map; PAT; BCP</p>
<p><b>6. What are the rules that regulate the decision-making?</b> Who sets the decision-making rules? How do the decision-making rules affect actor's access to the decision-making? How is influence being used? <b>Reasoning:</b> This question links the MSP to its "institutional" side: what are the rules that govern, how and by whom are they being set, how are they enforced, arbitrated and sanctioned?</p>	<p><b>6. What are the identified constraints / bottlenecks in the decision-making process? Are changes needed in the decision-making process, in the governance agreements?</b></p>	<p>Institutional analysis; Power Cube; Forms of Power; Spaces/Levels of power; Power Ranking; Net-Map; Power Matrix; BCP; Circle of Coherence</p>

<p><b>7. To what extent are these interests/ goals reflected in outcomes of decision-making? (reputation/ perception)</b> And in the outcomes of the collaborative undertaking? <b>Reasoning:</b> This is the expression of the results of the 'power' processes within the MSP.</p>	<p><b>7. How can the decision-making and the collaboration be organized such that all benefit and see the results that are their interest?</b></p>	<p>Importance/Influence Matrix; FAM; Net-Map; BCP; Circle of Coherence</p>
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# Power dynamics in practice

Below are the summaries of the action researches implemented in this TLP, organized in three clusters of MSP typologies: value chains, natural resources, service delivery. At the end of each description, a weblink is provided to a full report of the action researcher using the methodological framework. In their reports action researchers presented their lessons learnt according to the methodological framework. The researchers also documented the tools they used and reflected on their own roles as researcher and facilitator.

## Value chain MSPs

### 1. ICCO: Seaweeds Net – Philippines

The seaweeds value chain network in Samar Island in the Philippines focuses on the influence of producers and other stakeholders in the value chain. There are three inter-related issues of power dynamics: low income of fisher folks, environmental destruction, and ineffective governance. The action researcher tested a method allowing all stakeholders to have dialogue on power relations in the cooperative process.



**Action researcher: Penpen Libres**

**Weblink to report**

**Email Penpen**

[▶ Watch video](#) Penpen Libres, Philippines

### 2. Fair Trade Original: Citrus Value chain – Ghana

Citrus farmers in Ghana are interested in selling their citrus fruits under fair trade criteria. The value chain consists of a wide range of primary and secondary stakeholders: smallholder farmers, juice factories, importers, Fair Trade Original, supermarkets, consumers. The objective is empowerment of smallholder farmers through their active participation in the MSP. A manual for farmers on power analysis was developed.



**Action researcher: Kobina Esia-Donkoh**

**Email Kobina**

**Weblink to report**

[▶ Watch video](#) Kobina Esia-Donkoh, Ghana



### 3. Fair Trade Original: Global

This Fair Trade Original case is situated at the global level and concerns stakeholder understanding of 'Fair Trade Assessments' and the follow-up of findings in the value chain of those assessments. Fair Trade Assessment assess standards of partners to make sure producers and workers benefit and to guarantee the 'fairness' claim on products towards clients. Some partners do not stick to deadlines and in many cases follow-up is poor. The objective is to improve the Fair Trade Assessment system by developing it into a multi-stakeholder process.

**Action researchers: Anand Das & Arati Pandya, Sanmari Jennop**

**Weblink to report**

**Email Arati & Anand, Sanmari**

## Natural resources related MSPs

### 4. Cordaid: Civil society coalition in Oil Spills Regulatory Mechanism – Nigeria

This case takes place in the Niger Delta in Nigeria, a densely populated, poor area with enormous oil resources. The action-research focuses on ensuring effective participation of NACGOND (National Coalition on Gas flaring and Oil spills in the Niger Delta) in the multi stakeholder process with government, oil companies and international actors for establishment of an independent Oil Spill Regulatory Mechanism (OSRM). One of the challenges for effective participation of civil society (NACGOND) in the multi-stakeholder negotiations is finding good ways for civil society collaboration across ethnic boundaries. One of the options for strengthening the position of civil society is the introduction of the international RUGGIE framework. Thus, in this case, not only power relations between different stakeholders, but also power relations within civil society are complicated and subject of research: 'How to empower civil society in emerging multi-stakeholder dialogues?'



**Action researcher: Akinyinka Akinyoade**

**Email Yinka**

**Weblink to report**

### 5. Both Ends: Palm Oil – Indonesia

This case focuses on the Western part of Indonesia, Kalimantan, which is amongst the top palm oil producing regions in the world. This brings a variety of problems with it, such as conflicts over logging, community land, food producing systems, and economic interests. The government policy is focused on producing as much palm oil as possible. To address the root causes underlying these conflicts, a spatial planning map is being developed as a negotiation tool among the different stakeholders. Especially the inclusion of local communities requires special attention.

**Action researcher: Augustine Lumangkun**

**Email Augustine**

**Weblink to report**

### 6. Both Ends: Roundtable Sustainable Palm Oil – Indonesia

The second case of Both Ends concentrates on the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). RSPO Certification Systems states that certification is not possible when there are ongoing disputes, which requires that members make serious efforts to resolve disputes regarding land. Yet, many RSPO members – plantation companies and mills, smallholder oil palm growers and NGOs – find it difficult to deal with such disputes adequately and in a timely manner. This case focuses on the attempt of Both Ends to initiate the Dispute Settlement Facility (DSF) under the aegis of the RSPO, aiming to develop a conflict manual that will help to resolve land disputes hindering the RSPO.

**Action researcher: Ramy Bulan**

**Email Ramy**

**Weblink to report**

 **Watch video** Ramy Bulan University of Malaya, Malaysia



### 7. ETC Foundation: Biocultural Community Protocol – Ghana

Both ETC cases deal with the use of a Biocultural Community Protocol (BCP): a community-led instrument that promotes participatory advocacy for the recognition and support for customary rights and sustainable use of biodiversity. The process of developing and using BCPs involves negotiation processes with different stakeholders. This Ghana case strives for the protection of sacred forests against an Australian gold mining company. The case is

interesting because of the power dynamics between this mining company and other stakeholders. Furthermore, sacred forests are often neglected in their roles for supplying community well-being as well as contributing to conservation of biodiversity. ETC is developing a manual on using BCPs in MSP negotiations.

**Action researcher: Emmanuel Derbile**

**Email Emmanuel**

**Weblink to report**



## 8. ETC Foundation: Biocultural Community Protocols – Kenya

In this case, the BCP is applied in the Lamu District in Kenya, a region with different ethnic groups. An infrastructure project is planned there, creating a system of railroads, highways and pipelines from Lamu to South Sudan and Ethiopia. Although it can be an answer to the economic woes in the area, the impact of the people of Lamu and its environment should not be understated, and little information on the project has been released to the people of Lamu. A coalition of groups, Save Lamu, was created to deal with the challenges. The case addresses internal power dynamics among the different indigenous communities and how to strategize for engaging with powerful external stakeholders.



**Action researcher: Pilly Martin and Paul Goldsmith**

**Email Pilly & Paul**

**Weblink to report**

 **Watch video** Pilly Martin, Kenya

## 9. ICCO: Forestry programme – Guatemala

How to improve power relations within the cooperative process between the various stakeholders – uniting aspects of equal voice, participation, and access and control over benefits for the stakeholders involved, in particular the women? This case is about forestry programmes in Guatemala, focusing on promoting competitiveness and sustainability of producers, organizational strengthening in forestry governance, and supporting lobby activities in favor of property rights and climate change issues. The case specifically focuses on the influence of communities (and women within communities) in forestry programmes and tested a dynamic stakeholder power mapping tool: the Four Quadrants of Change tool.

**Action researcher: Job Blijdenstein**

**Email Job**

**Weblink to report**



## Service delivery MSPs

### 10. Cordaid: Home based care – Malawi

The second Cordaid case treats community driven care and support services that strives to bridge the gap in existing health and care infrastructures (which hinder effective progress on the MDGs). The case emphasizes constraints in developing a consortium for home based care. The work of home based care, often done by women, is taken for granted and not supported by health services. It needs recognition, compensation and support. Other learning goals

are centered on questions of 'How to come to a shared change agenda?' 'Does cooperation empower individual organizations at a national/international level?' 'How can we take power differences between stakeholders into account, in order to ensure effective participation of smaller/weaker stakeholders?'

**Action researcher: Priscilla Matinga**

**Email Priscilla**

**Weblink to report**

### 11. Waste: Sanitation sector in 2 cities – Malawi

Both cases of Waste take place in Malawi. Waste works in Malawi on sanitation and the solid waste area. The objective is that clients have access to sustained sanitation. This is done by a contemporary consortium, such as city authorities, banks, and universities. The main objective of the consortium is to facilitate Public Sanitation Utility, providing services to clients and employing people in sanitation who usually have a low status in their society. There are considerable power struggles within the consortium. A watchdog is brought in the process to look at the consortium and its performance, to inform on power relations and to look at utility (in terms of conditions of its employees), service and satisfaction levels. A concession contract was developed between the local city government, a service delivery institution and a NGO having a role as arbitrator.



**Action researcher: Peter Chinoko**

**Email Peter**

**Weblink to report**

## Insight #1

### Tipping the power balance requires key actors to have mutual respect and trust

We present five insights that have emerged during this TLP. The first insight deals with the psychological dimension of power. “Be the change you wish to see in the world” is a quote from Ghandi that hints at the psychological dimension of power. Many local researchers reported difficulties in using the word ‘power’ with groups of stakeholders. It may put powerful stakeholders “in the hot seat” and will evoke a defensive response. We decided to not use the word power extensively, but used ‘trust building’ and ‘interdependencies’ to discuss it.

The importance of trust building is described by Ramy Bulan, action researcher in the **Roundtable Sustainable Palm Oil** case: “While the MSP ideal is to neutralize the differences among the stakeholders and to create a level playing field, in reality an imbalance of power often exists among the state and non-state actors, as well as between parties with powerful economic interests and those who have little or no resources. In the case of a palm oil company having a dispute over land with local communities, there is an underlying sense of distrust. One of the more vocal and influential members of the community said: “The company drags the matter on and on. They want to weaken us and eventually go to court, so that we lose and they can have the land for free”. Another community member said “Even if we lose in court, where else can we go? We will remain here. This is our land.” Building of trust between stakeholders is important to begin a MSP and for a multi-stakeholder system of governance to work. It is important to move the parties from their position of rights towards a common interest, and from a contentious position to a mutually beneficial ground.”

In the case of **Save Lamu-LAPSSET MSP** in Kenya, the early meetings between the researchers and communities were as much about finding common ground between the different groups in the Save Lamu coalition – and trying to resolve internal tensions through dialogue – as about developing strategies to fulfill their demands in negotiations with external stakeholders. Having a facilitator from the local area was important because four different Kiswahili dialects are spoken. But this sometimes led to a perception that some groups were listened to more than others. The facilitator, Pilly Martin, was very aware of that and made great efforts to ensure she was seen to be inclusive in bringing in different perspectives. Pilly has extensive experience in peace building and conflict resolution in countries like Somalia and Southern Sudan. This enabled her to



mediate between internal divergent interests and positions towards the large infrastructural project. As she emphasizes inclusivity that should lead to dialogue – and practices what she preaches, suspicion between ethnic groups was reduced to some extent. Harmonizing internal positions – as far as possible – before engaging with external stakeholders is central for making progress and not becoming victims of power plays by external stakeholders. A more harmonious relationship is emerging in the MSP and the struggle has born fruits, not missing some rising of temperatures here and there.

In the case of the **Samar Seaweeds value chain** in the Philippines, Penpen Libres reflected on his role in facilitating discussions on power dynamics in MSP as follows: “Apart from having a good understanding of the value chain framework and approaches, such as basic concepts, value chain mapping, forms of value chains and ensuring the active participation of different actors in the MSP, the local researcher should establish rapport with different stakeholders, develop trust and confidence, establish credibility and maintain objectivity. The latter means listening to all sides.”

In several MSPs, the facilitators created awareness among the disadvantaged stakeholders that they also have power. Using the tool “Expressions and faces of power” (power within, power over, power with, power to), the researchers could make them aware of their ‘power with and within’. As Kobina Esiah-Donkoh writes on the MSP for the **citrus value chain** in Ghana: “It was quite difficult to explain the concept of power to participants, owing to the negative perception that connotes the concept. We used ‘participation’ as a key issue and explained that one has power if she or he has the ability 1. to be seen 2. to be heard 3. to influence views to be implemented. The power ranking tool was simplified to suit the understanding of citrus farmers, because most could not read or write any language. There was a revelation of power, which is inherent in the (citrus) farmer associations. It can be conceptualized as ‘power with’. The farmer associations have been formed, some more than decades ago, to enable farmers to address common challenges, access resources such as credits, inputs and training from governmental and non-governmental organizations. This inherent power drives the association through good and challenging moments. The purpose is to impress upon the farmers, who tend to think that they are ‘powerless’ that power is not negative, but with them – power with. It is necessary for farmers to have self-worth within themselves. The MSP therefore is a critical platform where stakeholder interactions increases their ‘power within’.”

### **Trusted media to prevent manipulation**

For key actors to engage in MSPs with trust often requires a change of their attitude and ability to see other actors with respect. In some cases, this respect can be derived from international laws and conventions, such as the Human Rights Convention. In the case of oil spills in Nigeria, Cordaid’s suggestion was to explore the UN “Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework for Business and Human Rights, developed by former Representative of the Secretary-General on Business and Human Rights, John Ruggie. See: <http://www.business-humanrights.org/Links/Repository/965591>.

The local researcher, Akinyinka Akinyoade, noted that in the context of highly volatile conflicts over gas flaring and oil spills in Nigeria, the important role of trusted and independent media cannot be overemphasized. Suggesting the way forward, the local researcher indicates that the MSP should serve as platform for equal media representation. The attendance and participation of the media in the MSP is important, because it would give limited scope for manipulation or suppression of news by any stakeholder.



## Insight #2

### Explore key actors' visible and/or hidden power

How are stakeholders linked to power? Once a basis of trust and willingness of key actors to engage has been established, a next step is to jointly explore different expressions, faces and understandings of power. Key actors' power is often related to resources, spaces and terms of engagement. Many expressions of power are hidden. Hence, any facilitator who embarks on power analysis should have facilitation skills and good knowledge of the cultural ways of the "rules of the game".

*"Knowledge is power but .... follow who controls the money and the politics .....understand the impacts of illegal use of power and violence".* This is the most essential issue to understand power in MSPs according to Job Blijdenstein, local researcher of the forestry governance and gender case in Guatemala. Money (or controlling budgets) as a resource and source of power is often encountered in MSP settings as well. Apart from knowledge, there are also other resources that give actors power. Examples of resources linked to power that emerged from the Guatemala case include:

- one's position and ability to participate in the decision making structures within the Association of Forestry-based community organizations (ACOFOP),



- the opportunity for ACOFOP community members to engage actively with economic ventures, to organize work processes and economic activities in such a manner that men, women and families can take joint responsibility and benefit from the activities.

In terms of hidden power in the case of ACOFOP, the local basis of power in terms of membership of 'only' 15 recognized member organizations may seem modest. However, the influence and reputation of ACOFOP is growing quickly with the awareness of the importance of forest for environmental security in international debates. The businesses and institutions that certify forestry related timber and non-timber products and processes do have considerable power, but according to the local researcher, they can hardly be considered stakeholders in the local decision making processes.

Another example of hidden power comes from **Nigeria**. Denying a large-scale oil spill can be of interest to certain stakeholders. An oil company invited Fr. Obi, an NGO representative to participate in a helicopter flight for verification of the extent of the damage of an oil spill. Father Obi discovered that since he was not technically knowledgeable on the issue of flight paths, he was powerless to direct the pilot to the particular vantage points. Indeed he had to rely on the directions given by the pilot and he could only base his assessment of spill area to what the pilot showed him from the air. In this case, the extent of the damage did not seem large, though the NGO representative suspected that he was shown only a small section of the spill-affected area.

The way we think about power always contains an implicit theory of change: if we can 'better see', 'better think', we will be able to secure 'better action'. The methodological framework underlying this TLP assumes that applying specific tools will lead to transparency about the power politics at work. Paul Goldsmith, researcher with the **Save Lamu case in Kenya** on conditions before engaging in a MSP: "A better starting point for a progressive research strategy is to clarify the political and transformative intentions of the proposed process, and to reflect on the power, positionality and roles of those involved. This did not occur in Lamu—where a review of the positionality and transitional political factors beforehand would have been quite useful. It is important to recognize the fact that Lamu and the coastal community has been struggling to come to grips with the problems of power differentials for five decades."

MSPs operate in a complex context. Part of the complexity can be a long history of the least powerful being abused, overruled, neglected, and excluded. In many cases, a peace and reconciliation process, at individual or collective level, is needed before engaging constructively with all kinds of tools that may reinvigorate all kinds of historical power plays.

### **Systemic differences addressed?**

The case from RSP0 also puts a warning on the table: "Even if the parties are willing to dialogue on an equal basis, systemic differences exist in the balance of power, capacity and resources. There are uneven levels in terms of access to resources and information, as well as experience in understanding and dealing with financial issues. These systemic differences inevitably spill over and affect the process. In the case of indigenous communities faced with company power, most of them feel highly insecure about their rights and are easily waylaid by short-term cash inducements or promised benefits, such that without proper understanding they easily give up their rights".

Also the Lamu case in Kenya positions the power dynamics within a broader political context: "Patrimonial governance has worked to channel more aggressive members of local communities into opportunistic acquisition, often as middle-men for local and national elites. This is also a direct consequence of the coast's dysfunctional political leadership. Local leaders have sought to, and gotten away with paying lip service to local grievances due to the passivity of their constituents. Leaders enjoy the benefits of aligning themselves with national client networks and ethnic alliances to the detriment of defending coastal rights".

Many problems and solutions to conflicts in the cases researched relate to governance gaps, created by globalization and the scope and impact of economic forces and actors. The case of Lamu is a clear example of this. Yet, also the Lamu communities have power. They protested and wanted to be heard at the groundbreaking ceremony, on 2 March 2012. They were not allowed by the Government of Kenya to protest when the presidents of Kenya, Ethiopia and South Sudan had their ceremony. However, their concerns were voiced through national and international media, such as CNN: “Will oil plans ruin an African paradise”?

See <http://edition.cnn.com/video/#/video/business/2012/07/09/marketplace-africa-lamu-port-plans.cnn?iref=allsearch>. International media attention is one of the strategies used to address powerful international actors and economic processes. Recently, the Save Lamu coalition has received some small funding to bring community-based organisations along the Kenyan LAPSET corridor together to discuss common issues concerning LAPSET development, how communities will be affected and what actions are currently being taken in different communities. And a national meeting is also being planned to bring the coalition to Nairobi to discuss pertinent issues of LAPSET with government ministries, state corporations and International NGOs and institutions. The international media exposure helped to create some legitimacy of the Save Lamu coalition and its cause. This might have added to their fund raising success.

### **Actor power**

If we explore power from an actor's perspective, there are two cases where specific actor roles are interesting to describe: a police officer in Philippines and a traditional earth priest in Ghana. The police officer in the Philippine MSP clarified to the fisher folk how his power to fine illegal groups that use dynamite in fishing is limited, due to the political context. Local politicians have a hidden power as they are linked to criminal groups. Thus, when illegal dynamite fishermen are caught, the police officer has to release them as instructed by higher police authorities. Despite his lack of resources to deal with criminal activities and illegal fishing, he was very motivated to play an active and positive role in the MSP in solving threats to seaweeds farmers. He was an unexpected ally to the fisher folk and seaweeds producers!

Culture shapes power dynamics. In northern Ghana, the earth priest has significant authority based on the traditional beliefs of the local communities. Based on this spirituality, earth priests command the authority over land issues. Through the MSP process in Ghana, the earth priests agreed to travel to a regional town to defend their views. This was seen as a huge effort from the local level to engage with powerful stakeholders in a town, who can employ several means to underscore their power position such as formal procedures for meetings.

### **Hidden power**

Paul Goldsmith elaborates: “The concepts of hidden and invisible power represent the most useful contribution of the MSP toolbox for the Lamu case study. Hidden power manifests itself as a matrix of informal and externally imposed rules on the local level. The power of narratives helps explain how hidden power sustained the systematic social exclusion of indigenous coastal Africans, the Arab-Swahili communities, pastoralists, and other minorities that characterizes post independence governance in Kenya. In terms of local cultural ways to know the rules of the game, it's important to reflect on communication, the use of language and how local stakeholders proudly use proverbs, sayings, metaphors and poetry.

### **Creating spaces**

Empowerment of disadvantaged stakeholders often starts with becoming aware of their 'power within'. A next step can be to jointly mobilize this 'power within' as 'power with'. This calls for collective action. To create or even claim spaces for engagement is important for disadvantaged stakeholders to engage in the MSP. The fact that disadvantaged stakeholders also have power was a revelation for many least empowered stakeholders in several cases.

### **Legal space for empowerment**

In the cases of ETC Foundation in Ghana and Kenya, the local communities were assisted by NGOs to develop biocultural community protocols (BCP). These protocols describe the rights and responsibilities of local communities within the context of local customary stewardship roles as well as national legal environmental frameworks. Most governments are subscribing to the UN conventions and have ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity. The MSP action researches complemented the NGO support to the communities to explore and clarify the negotiation dimensions of a BCP. Pilly Martin, action researcher from Kenya on the link between BCP and MSP: "One of the tools that the communities were excited about was the Biocultural Community Protocol. Communities find the BCP to be an opportunity to finally say who they are, what is their history, where they came from, how they settled there, what are their values, what are their resources, e.g. the pastures for grazing, forests for honey, water for fishing. This is what makes who we are, this is our identity. The BCP promises to bring out all these issues and the communities can claim some identity space that has been missing. As a connecting factor, the BCP informed the communities on land rights from different legal perspectives as well as their right to be informed on the LAPSET project. The BCP has thus been a very empowering tool in an era where land contestation and denial of access to resources. The communities now want to claim their space. The BCP provides that space".

Many local researchers in this TLP expressed that it was hard to combine research and facilitation roles. Getting involved in the MSP inevitably leads to raising expectations. It was considered much simpler to just collect data as a researcher, and present it at the end, than designing the action research as a collective sense making and learning opportunity for all stakeholders. However, the action research approach to power dynamics helped to gain more ownership from stakeholders over the process and potentially could lead to more sustainable results.



## Insight #3

### Use specific tools to clarify power dynamics in MSP

The toolbox presented in the methodological framework was developed after the inception workshop in December 2011. According to the evaluators, the toolkit added value in this Thematic Learning Programme by providing the local researchers a practical way to set up the action research process. Below we present some of the tools as applied in the action research on power dynamics in MSPs.

#### Four Quadrants of Change, ICCO – Guatemala

People easily get into arguments about “correct strategies” to realize change. Often with a little bit of dialogue, they discover that they are actually talking about complementary strategies. Then, they start to understand the limitation of their own advocated strategy, and that it cannot succeed on its own. These types of insights spurred Ken Wilber to popularize an integral approach to support a comprehensive and integrated view of the world. A key product of this work is what is now referred to as the “four-quadrant” diagram. Below, the Four Quadrants Of Change Framework filled by community organizations in forestry programmes, Guatemala.



	<i>Interior</i>	<i>Exterior</i>
	<b>1. Psychological</b>	<b>2. Inter-personal relations</b>
<i>Individual</i>	<i>Concerned with one's own sense of being, self-confidence, knowledge, capacities and perceptions</i>	<i>Concerned with behavior, developing relationships and personal networks: family cohesion, conflict management in ACOFOP Board, capacities to develop, negotiate, be diplomatic</i>
	<b>3. Culture/social</b>	<b>4. Structures and systems</b>
<i>Collective</i>	<i>Concerned with collectively held cultural values of fairness and justice: sustainability, self-sufficiency, no favoritism, mutual respect and equal rights, transparency, initiatives promoted</i>	<i>Concerned with governance, decision-making processes and formal Institutions: ACOFOP Board and elections, by-laws, membership, innovation, influence in forestry legislation</i>

This tool can be used in different stages of an MSP, but particularly at a moment when strategies for change are discussed. It helps to generate conversations that bring out essence of participants' notions of change. It resulted in the realization that intervention and action strategies by the community organizations and those who support them should be multi-layered. In the Guatemala MSP, a meeting with top management of ACOFOP was held to define the most important questions for change to be discussed with a group of representatives of the community organisations and the ACOFOP Board:

#### Internal relations within ACOFOP

1. How to strengthen the participation of members in the community organisations; gender and empowerment maintaining social coherence
2. How to strengthen local economic development and employment in the CO

#### External relations

4. How to develop the collective business and value chain?
5. How to deal with government institutions?
3. How to expand the Multi-stakeholder platform membership?

Participants are grouped on the basis of the prepared questions, and participants receive a marker pen and a few sheets of paper. Before the group discussion starts, participants are asked to reflect individually on the question, and write down short key words on the sheets of paper. In plenary, the leaders of each group give concrete examples of strategies for change within the framework of their MSP and their question on a flip chart or wall, applying the 4QC framework. To further organize a diverse number of suggestions into coherent strategies for change, these suggestions were located in four quadrants of change. Thus, the interrelation of the different change strategies was clarified, see table.

	<i>Interior</i>	<i>Exterior</i>
	<b>1. Psychological</b>	<b>2. Inter-personal relations</b>
<i>Individual: initial engagement in the MSP</i>	<i>At the most basic level, emphasis on personal confidence and participation</i>	<i>Focus on existing relations within family and groups, assertiveness.</i>
	<b>3. Culture/social</b>	<b>4. Structures and systems</b>
<i>Collective: Advanced, collective engagement in the MSP</i>	<i>Focus on the development of knowledge and capacities:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To know (internal)</li> <li>• To be able to (environment)</li> <li>• To be motivated (culture, interpersonal, structure, \$)</li> </ul>	<i>It shifts to being able to communicate "in public", speak clearly and organize thoughts.</i>

#### The MSP Train Concept in the citrus value chain, Fair Trade Original – Ghana

Participants described the concept of MSP as an interlinked train system moving in a defined direction with a purpose. The train moves the primary stakeholders who are seated in the compartments. These comprise the farmers, organised in associations; the processor Fruittiland; the importer, Fair and Organic Products; and the wholesaler, Fair Trade Original. Other specific stakeholders include Fair Trade International, FLO Certifier (the inspector), GIZ and International



Fertiliser Development Centre, the IFDC as donors. The engine of the train indicates the force that drives the stakeholders. The rail is conceptualised as Fair Trade while the smoke shows the extent of victory or success of the multi-stakeholder processes in the citrus value chain. The citrus fruits, seen along the rail and on the canopy of the tree brings the stakeholders together.

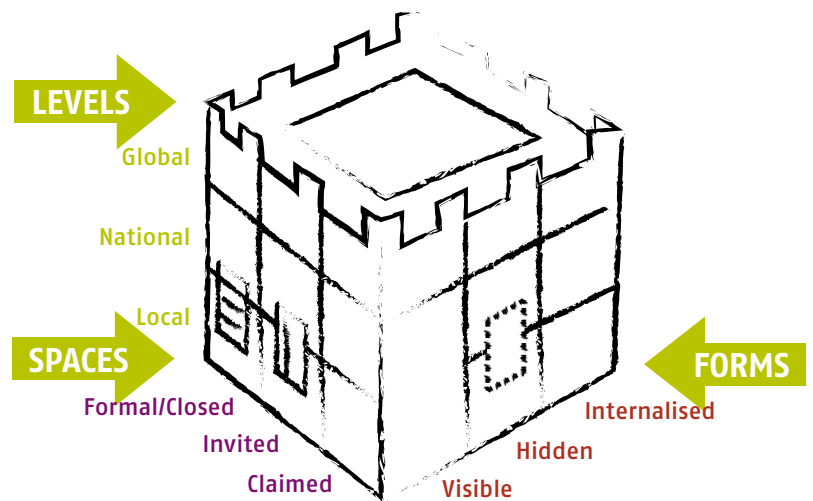
The MSP train system concept explains how the stakeholders are interlinked and interrelated in the citrus value chain. It shows that the standards and principles set by Fair Trade give the direction of the chain. A dynamic MSP is therefore needed to provide good quality 'fuel' and best 'driving or piloting skills' to make the Fair Trade value chain successful. The concept therefore explains that the stronger the machine, the whiter the smoke and vice versa. Thus, the strength of MSP determines the success of the citrus value chain.

### **Powerhouse, ETC Foundation – Kenya**

Stakeholder power analysis is crucial to inform advocacy and negotiation. During the second MSP meeting, the power cube was discussed with members of the Save Lamu and representatives from ethnic communities, such as hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, farmers and fisher folk. The dimensions of the power cube were written in English and Pilly translated the concepts into Kiswahili. To facilitate understanding, the power cube became a powerhouse, using analogies of Islamic architecture in Lamu. People were asked how they would fit themselves and other groups involved in the LAPSSET project into the powerhouse. This led to a very animated discussion.

For example, in Figure 1:

- The door represents the visible economic power of the communities at local and national levels, and is a powerful symbol of Lamu culture.
- The window represents formal/closed power, crossing the local and national levels, e.g. the Government of Kenya Vision 2030, which communities are unable to participate in.
- An example of internalised power is the BCP that communities have been developing. It is internalised because it reflects their histories, cultures and customary governance of resources.
- People felt that elected local leaders had hidden power since they only have power when they talk to local people, but are not listened to at the national level. A window with dotted lines represents this.
- The half-open window represents invited space at local and national level. For example, the government created the Lamu Port Steering Committee, which Save Lamu members are now invited to participate in. However, they are not involved in agenda setting.



It is worthy to note that the global level is also represented at the regional level. It is crucial to note that changes in power are possible over time due to changes in the socio-political environment. What happens at one level can affect power dynamics at categories of spaces of power, and may limit space for participation and affect the forms of power as well.

### Resource dependencies mapping tool, ICCO - Philippines

In analyzing goals and interest in MSP, it is advisable to identify the basic individual interests, the common and conflicting interests. These are important aspects in the effective handling and management of power relations, and in ensuring sustainability of the MSP. It could provide better appreciation and understanding of each actor's situation, become more sensitive to others interests, and identify ways of strengthening collaboration among the actors' themselves. It must be noted that a MSP is multi-actor and indeed multi-interests.

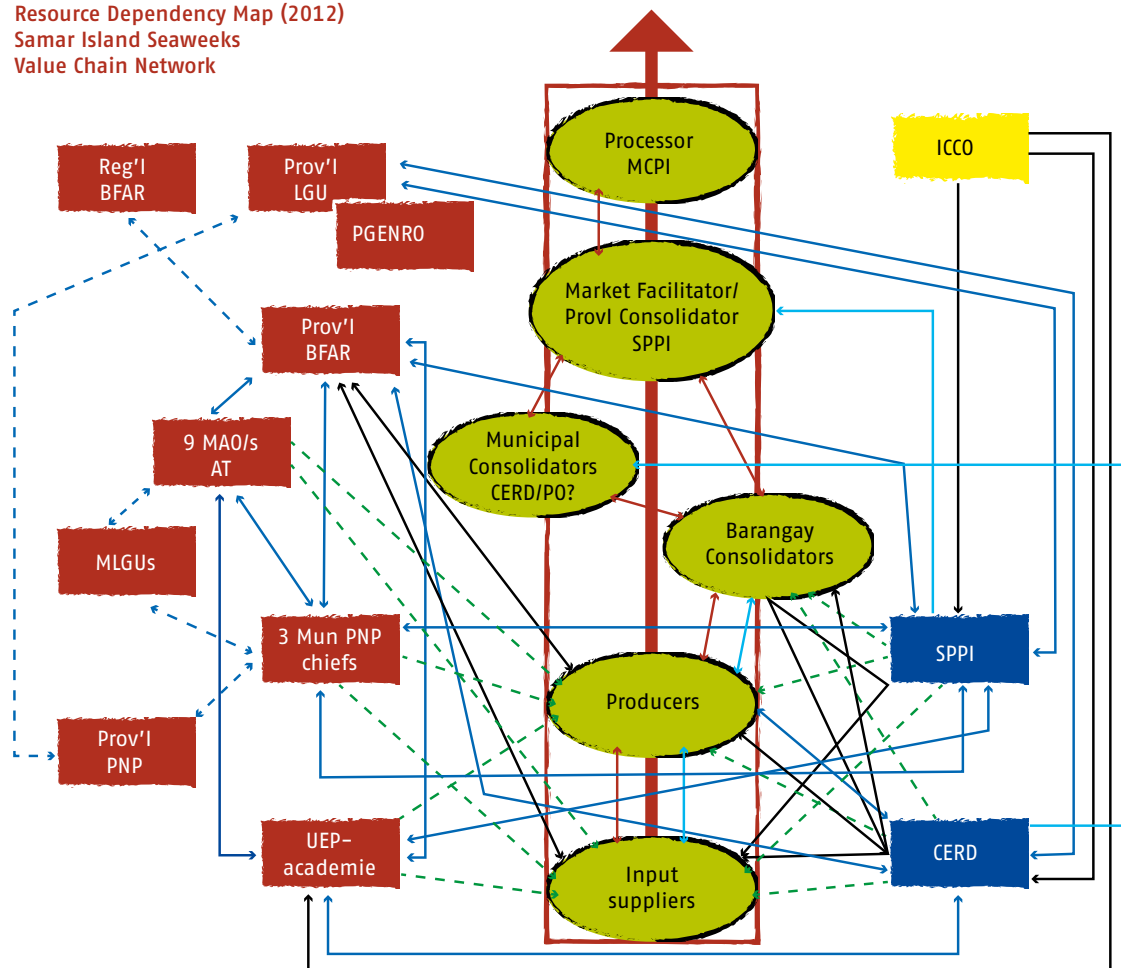
**Table 1: Stakeholder Register**

Name Of Stakeholder	Type (PO/Coop, NGO, Govt., Private, Etc.)	Function(S)/ Role(S)	Activities	Goals/Interests (Value chain and/ or MSP)	Resources
1. ....					
2. ....					

The initiators (i.e. NGOs) of the MSP must recognise that other actors' primary motivation in involving themselves in a MSP is founded on every individual's basic interests (i.e. personal, for others/altruistic, organizational/institutional, economic, political, etc.). While the NGOs have in their interests and agenda the improvement of the marginalized

groups (poverty alleviation), it shall likewise be sensitive to other actors' interests that join the MSP. As such, interdependency of interests can be clearly defined, which will likewise serve the basis of its strengthening. For example, the fisher folks' need for increased income and sustainable livelihood are the mandate of the NGOs, as well as of government institutions. The concern for environmental preservation is a common interest of all stakeholders within the Seaweeds Net. Nevertheless, the entry of other new actors (i.e. the powerful) to the MSP may mean changes in the whole configuration of managing conflicting interests of different stakeholders. Analyzing resources (of actors), both material and non-materials, shall always be in reference to the problematic or agenda, hence, to determine the basis and degree of influence of varying actors involve. Information on resource dependency can be gathered in a matrix (resource dependency scan) containing the type of resources, each actor role (i.e. recipient, provider or co-equal), areas to be strengthened (dependency), and requirements for strengthening.

**Resource Dependency Map (2012)**  
Samar Island Seaweeds Value Chain Network



- Legend**
- ↔ Bus Transactions Dependency
  - Material Dependency
  - - - Non-material Dependency
  - ↔ Co-equal Dependency



**Table 2: Resource Dependency Scan**

<i>Name Of Stakeholder</i>	<i>Type of resource (e.g. financial, training, inputs)</i>	<i>Role in dependency (e.g. provider, recipient, co-equal)</i>	<i>What needs to be strengthened</i>	<i>Requirements for strengthening</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
<i>A. With existing dependency/ collaboration</i>					
1. ....					
2. ....					
<i>B. Potential dependency/ collaboration</i>					
1. ....					
2. ....					

In a MSP in a value setting, resource dependencies between actors are discernible and can be illustrated in several facets, namely: i) between operators in the chain (vertical dependencies involving business transactions); ii) between operators and supporters (characterize by provider–recipient relation); and, iii) between supporters (or co-equals). The information in the matrix can be plotted overlapping the VC map that is called the resource dependency map in a value chain. This can help easily determine who are dependent on whom, on what resource/s, who provides more, who are co-equals, among others.

### **Biocultural Community Protocol, ETC Foundation – Ghana**

CIKOD, a Ghanaian non–profit organization, introduced the idea of developing a Biocultural Community Protocol (BCP) as a tool for the people of Tanchara to negotiate with external parties and assert their rights. Legal instruments are derived from national and international agreements on human rights, biodiversity, agriculture, climate change and cultural heritage. For example, under the Convention on Biological Diversity communities have the right:

- To be consulted prior to a party obtaining access to genetic resources (CBD Article 15(5) and Nagoya Protocol Article 6(2));
- To be fully informed of the nature of access of genetic resource (CBD Article 15(5) and Nagoya Protocol Article 6(2));
- To give or withhold permission or consent for the sharing of the genetic resource (CBD Article 15(5) and Nagoya Protocol Article 6(2));
- To negotiate access to a genetic resource under mutually agreed terms (CBD Article 15(4) and Nagoya Protocol Article 7);
- For efforts to be made to ensure that communities, as the owners of genetic resources, can fully participate in the scientific research on such genetic resources (CBD Article 15(6));
- To receive a fair and equitable share in the results of research and benefits that arise from the commercial (or other) use of a community's genetic resources or traditional knowledge (CBD Article 15(7)) based on mutually agreed terms (Nagoya Protocol Article 5(2) and (5)). Benefits can be monetary or non-monetary (Nagoya Protocol Article 5(3));
- To have taken into consideration their customary laws, community protocols and procedures with respect to traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources (Nagoya Protocol Article 12(1)); and
- Not have restricted the customary use and exchange of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge within and amongst communities (Nagoya Protocol Article 12(4)).

The private sector (including researchers who intend to or eventually use genetic resources or traditional knowledge for profit) does not have legally binding obligations if they are not contracting parties to the relevant international laws.

However, as “users” of genetic resources and traditional knowledge, businesses and researchers have the responsibility to:

- Share the benefits of genetic resources and traditional knowledge with owners and to support the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components globally (Nagoya Protocol Article 10);
- Provide information regarding prior informed consent, the source of the genetic resource, establishment of mutually agreed terms and/or utilization of genetic resources to a designated checkpoint within a host government (Nagoya Protocol Article 17(1)); and
- Comply with any reporting requirements as a user of genetic resources/traditional knowledge set out in mutually agreed terms (Nagoya Protocol Article 17(1)(b)).

BCPs are tools to address conflicts facing communities and external users of the same area that share and use genetic and natural resources and associated traditional knowledge. In Ghana, a first draft of the BCP was made in April 2011. This drew on information gathered during the ongoing community development work, including mapping of the sacred groves, wetlands and burial grounds, and traditional decision-making structures. The draft was then discussed with community groups – men, women, elders, youth and traditional leaders – to ensure that all parts of the community had a say. The draft BCP documented the community’s cultural values, vision for endogenous development, customary rights and responsibilities, and institutions and processes for Prior Informed Consent.

In 2012, the ‘Tanchara BCP’ was complemented with information on legal rights by the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) in Ghana. The CHRAJ documented community rights according to customary, national and international laws which and the findings were included in the BCP. The anticipated legal recognition of customary laws in Ghana, as promoted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Nagoya Protocol (Article 12), will be a significant boost in the Tanchara’s efforts to assert their rights. After its completion, the protocol will be signed by the Chief, the Queen Mother and the Tingandem, the earth priests. Hopefully also the District Chief Executive and Paramount chief will sign the BCP. Following the communities’ protests, gold mining by Azumah Resources has been postponed to 2013. This is a very significant achievement for the Tanchara community.

### **Participatory Maps, Both Ends – Indonesia**

The least empowered in this MSP are the indigenous people living in West Kalimantan, one of the top palm oil producing regions in the world, faced with claims on their lands. Empowerment of local communities to face external threats is important to protect their land rights and customary rights to manage the forest. Use was made of the tool ‘Positions of power sources’: discussions with government officials showed their internal powers such as budget allocations and external powers, such as handling conflicts with companies as a party of the conflict.

with the aim to integrate the competing interests on a ‘to be unification map’. This map is hoped to avoid future land tenure conflicts. The map is accompanied by a written document that describes the socio-cultural and economic resources that are identified on the map.

The MSP process started with a technical workshop at provincial level, where participatory mapping was discussed with 26 key stakeholders representing 15 institutions, such as NGOs, government agencies, forestry research institutes, companies and communities. The first day of the workshop was to discuss participatory mapping in Sanggau, the various land uses as understood by the government and the communities, separately. The next day, the simulation of uses in one map showed which areas have overlapping claims. These overlapping claims were taken forward in next workshops as a negotiation process, both at village level and with government representatives.

During workshops at village level, people from different sections within the communities were taught the use of GPS systems and compass. Then they mapped the area selected by them. Later the sub-villages maps were combined into a village map. The map shows in different colours: oil palm plantations, rubber plantations and tembawang.

Tembawang represents the customary forest and land management system practised by the Dayak Bidayuh in Sanggau. It consists of communal natural forest, island of secondary forest, managed honey trees, rubber plantation, swidden fallow, swidden lands, rice fields, village and home area in swidden lands. The society of Dayak Bidayuh recognizes three authorization concepts of land, that is:

1. Federation right, namely the property of the current tribe, which inhabits a village. Outsiders from the federation of adat (custom) do not have rights of that property.
2. Right of parenean represents a group property of a certain society inherited from forest clearing for farmland. Other residents of the village do not have the right to collect the products of that tembawang.
3. Individual right, empu oko, is individual property held by one core family, obtained from previous forest clearing of the tribe property.

The NGOs supporting communities explored their participatory way of working with the villages, and are questioning how to incorporate their maps in an official map that will be approved by National Land Agency. Follow-up MSP meetings, which include the companies, are planned for August 2012.

### **Expression & faces of power, Fair Trade Original – South Africa**

Fair Trade Original contracted a local researcher, Sanmari Hennop, to do an action research report on MSP processes in their fair trade supply train in South Africa. The research used the findings from a research done by Arati Pandya and Anand Das in Asia, where 10 different trading companies in India, Bangladesh and Nepal were visited who underwent the EFTA Assessments in 2010 and 2011. The European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) consists of 11 Fair Trade importers from 9 European countries. They support trading partnerships based on dialogue, transparency and respect that seeks greater equity in international trade. Fair Trade Original is one of these EFTA members and guarantees their customers that all products under their brand are produced according to the 10 Fair Trade principles as listed below.

- Principle 1: Creating Opportunities for Economically Disadvantaged Producers
- Principle 2a: Transparency and Accountability
- Principle 2b: Chain responsibility
- Principle 3: Fair Trading Practices
- Principle 4: Payment of Fair Prices and Wages
- Principle 5a: Child Labour
- Principle 5b: Forced Labour
- Principle 6a: Non-discrimination and Gender Equity
- Principle 6b: Freedom of Association
- Principle 7a: Working Conditions
- Principle 7b: Health & Safety
- Principle 8: Capacity Building
- Principle 9: Promotion of Fair Trade
- Principle 10: Environment



The action research by FTO in South Africa was done in parallel with the EFTA assessment process of the producers in the South African supply chain. The research on the multi-stakeholder process (MSP) was done through observation and direct engagement with supply chain actors utilizing the research tools.

Power is a significant factor in supply chain relations. In most conventional supply chains the buyer is seen as the actor with the most power, and the workers are seen as those with the least power. Their power is limited to influence their circumstances in the context of the supply chain. In a Fair Trade supply chain it is envisaged that power is more equitably distributed along the supply chain and that all key actors have more equal power relationships. Each main key actor or group has different interests and goals.

### **Sources of Power**

**'Power to'** is an expression that creates the belief that every individual has the ability to make a difference. The Fair Trade principles are based on dialogue, transparency and respect. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers and thus gives the 'power to' all stakeholders involved in these supply chains. However the EFTA fair trade assessment system is not developed by the marginalized workers and producers, but by the most powerful parties in the chain; the importers and their clients (Wereldwinkels and WAAR winkels). The same applies to product development and quality where the client has the power to make the final decision.

**'Power with'** is to act as a unit or join forces in a collective action in an MSP setting. Various actors in a supply chain will usually have similar interests and goals, experiences and knowledge. It therefore makes sense for them to work together if possible to pool these resources in order to reach a common goal.

**'Power within'** refers to the internal self-worth of an individual. This is enhanced in a MSP setting through capacity building of individuals and by raising their aspirations about change. The Fair Trade principle 8, 'Capacity Building', challenges EFTA assessed producers to develop the power within their individual employees.

### **Faces of power**

**Visible power** in the fair trade supply chains exist on three levels. Firstly, visible power is exercised by FTO in the dictation of product type, volume and price of it. Secondly, visible power is exercised by trading companies in their choice of producers to supply the requested product into the FTO market channel. The last area of visible power is not as direct as the previous two, and lays in the requirements of the EFTA standard. In order for producers to be part of this system and the FTO supply chain it is required of them to comply with the principles of the EFTA standard. They currently have very little influence on or 'power over' the structure and content of this standard, so in effect they need to comply with this standard in a top down approach.

**Hidden power** is exercised when powerful people and institutions maintain their influence by setting and manipulating agendas and marginalising the concerns and voices of less powerful groups. In theory Fair Trade Original and trading companies could have a hidden power over the producers if they play to a set of rules that are not understood by the producers as well as their workers. During the research, this was not found to be the case. To the contrary, FTO actively seeks to involve the interests of all of the main actors in their Fair Trade supply chain. Producers also have a certain degree of hidden power with regards to their workers, since they do not always communicate effectively the relevant information they have about the FTO supply. For this particular supply chain to truly be characterized as a multi-stakeholder, this communication needs to be improved.

**Invisible power** is when those with power are able to influence the belief system of others. Problems and issues are kept away not only from the decision table but also from the knowledge of different people including those affected by these decisions. The 2nd Fair Trade principle, 'Transparency & Accountability' in some way addresses invisible power as it calls for transparency and accountability within the assessed businesses. There are different levels where transparency is applicable and it is expected that transparency is present throughout the Fair Trade supply chain. During the research it was also observed that a certain degree of invisible power exist in this supply chain. This was seen on the worker level, where workers are unaware of systems and beliefs created by the EFTA assessment and fair trade principles. Most workers are aware of fair trade solely because the trust pays for their school fees. They are unaware of measures to be taken by producers on living wages that directly influence them.

### **Reflections**

It is very useful to have the toolbox with all the interesting tools for power analysis, but in several action researches, it has been difficult to test the tools in-depth, mostly due to time limits. If the use of tools does not fit in the on-going process, it is difficult for the researcher to use the tools. In the case of NACGOND in Nigeria, there were no meetings feasible where the researcher could apply tools. The NGO coalition, the government, the oil companies, the judiciary, the media, the donors did not meet in an MSP setting during the action-research period. Yet, the researcher used the rich picture and the tools for power ranking and expressions of power in individual conversations with key stakeholders.

## Insight #4

### Facilitate stakeholders to create improved decision-making rules

The 12 cases selected for this action research were very diverse, and also relied on interventions done by very diversely skilled local researchers. This implies that we often had discussion about what the common denominator of the cases was: 'what is the degree of MSP-ness...'. The convener organisations balanced between creating coherence on the one hand (emphasize the seven common research and action questions) and allowing for context specific solutions on the other hand (offering a menu of tools which researchers could pick, choose and adapt from as they deemed fit). Skills for action research and facilitation seem like cord-dancing skills.

#### **A MSP is broader than meetings**

In reflecting about MSPs, we often think and talk about round tables, and about how getting people to the table. However, round tables – the moment of meetings – are only a (small) part of the MSP. The MSP takes place in all kind of formal and informal or bilateral settings, due to a complex pattern of relations among key stakeholders. If a multi-stakeholder approach is the strategy of a donor or an international NGO, they have to understand this complex pattern of relationships and see themselves as an essential part of the MSP. In addition, the MSP doesn't limit itself to formal dialogue, but incorporates all kinds of informal relations as well. People combine resources, knowledge and relations from different networks, including donors.



### **The power of money**

And yet: Money is not always wanted or helpful! For example, Civil Society Organisations in the Niger Delta dealing with oil spills and gas flaring are often not interested in funding by oil companies. Accepting funding by oil companies makes civil society voiceless. In the Malawi case on Home Based Care, surprisingly many caregivers did not want to get incentives. Giving incentives was one of the intentions of the program, i.e. to develop a minimum package of incentives. The argument was that a faith community started Home-based Care Alliance and this voluntary work is part of a person's role as a believer. The Alliance suggested using funds to strengthen the linkage between HBC and safety-net programmes, not to pay for the volunteers. Donor power in terms of determining conditions for funding for their partner organisations may hinder learning. Many Civil Society Organisations, who receive funding from northern donor agencies, don't want to get a negative assessment, as this may jeopardise their future existence. So they are careful and less open in discussions.

### **Action research and change**

It is not easy to attribute changes for disadvantaged stakeholders to the action research process. However, what emerges from many of the cases is:

- Improved sense of clarity about the purpose of the cooperation, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders involved and improved internal communication of the stakeholders involved.
- New engagement in the cooperative process by stakeholders involved
- A strengthened sense of ownership over the process of cooperation (less donor) motivated.
- Greater coherence in the cooperative MSP platform.

 **Watch video** Herman Brouwer

In many of the action researches, it has been quite difficult to create opportunities to effectively work with the whole stakeholder group at the same time in the same locality. Stakeholders involved in the cooperative process are often overburdened with their 'own' organizational activities and find it difficult to give sufficient time to an action research in the cooperative process.

Once this takes place this shows in engagement in the process, a motivation to learn from practice and seeking ways for action to overcome constraints. Participants have a recognized stake in the action research and its results.

The action research was based on field realities and in this way, resulted in deeper insights. Not only deeper insights in the conceptual part, but also in the changes of the rules of the game, and in changes in attitudes of the some of the stakeholders involved. There are also situations where local stakeholders involved are very aware of existing power relations. And where the MSP is more for external actors, e.g. the northern donors, who want to learn about strategies on dealing with power.

In the case of Kenya, capacity building for the least empowered stakeholders has been an important topic to be well prepared for engaging in dialogues with external stakeholders at national level. The powerhouse tool (see insight #3) enabled the Save Lamu to understand the different stakeholders at different levels (local, national, international) and understand the concept of hidden power. In addition, the powerhouse helped to strategise relationships with other stakeholders including the media. The local researcher also did an organisational capacity assessment to enable Save Lamu to see where it needs organizational strengthening.

### A space to say 'no'

If local communities feel highly insecure about their rights, as in the case of Malaysian communities faced with land conflicts due to oil palm plantations, this throws up the need to train and build capacity to enable them to get full understanding of rights. This could include training in negotiation skills. This way they can be given the space to say 'no' if they chose to. A recent publication by Mariëtte van Huijstee of SOMO elaborates on choices for civil society organisations whether or not to engage in multi-stakeholder initiatives: [link to SOMO publication](#).

Empowerment could begin with the opinion makers and the influential members of the community, who could mentor and guide others. Among the communities themselves, building of consensus is important for meaningful negotiation and communication with other parties.

### Roles of facilitators

Various stakeholders in the RSP0 case expressed the hope that the facilitator should play a more "involved" role and perhaps be an intermediary between the parties. To some extent, she was able to relay some of the wishes to the Dispute Settlement Facility. At the same time, it was possible to bounce off some ideas to help the stakeholders to consider their positions. It was clear that a researcher's role can easily become one of facilitating change. Without taking sides, but allowing parties to bounce off their ideas, it helps to clarify the issues for themselves and allows them to move towards change.

Based on the perceived identities and interests, power is assigned to certain stakeholders, and needs to be made explicit. Especially the role of the facilitator should be examined, as this person often also has interests and stakes in the MSP as well but is often trusted to be neutral. The tools in the toolbox also help to clarify the stakes of the facilitator, if for example the facilitator is also included in the power ranking tool or the power cube.



## Insight #5

### “Make no mistake: the poor also have power!”

This action research is implemented in a context of climate crisis, financial crisis and food crisis and aims to contribute to finding ways of dealing with these crises. Our 21st century reality is one of interconnected people and ecosystems, and the consequent complexity and multi-layered nature of issues. Has the action research resulted in major changes for the disadvantaged stakeholders, often ‘the resource-poor’? Within the methodological framework of the TLP, this has can be derived question 7: have least empowered been able to influence rules of decision-making?

In the case of **fair trade citrus farmers in Ghana**, the inherent ‘power with’ as farmers’ organisations was a revelation. The farmer associations were formed, some decades ago, to address common challenges, to jointly access resources (credits, inputs, training). This inherent ‘power with’ drives the association through good and challenging moments. This power is very critical, because it is the essential factor that unites the farmers to act. This ‘power with’ thus becomes a key ingredient for farmers to sustain and promote the MSP.

For the least empowered to effectively use their power, several cases stress the importance of capacity building. The case of **fair trade citrus farmers in Ghana** states: “The need to build and strengthen capacities of farmers (taking into account gender dynamics) is critical for the citrus value chain to have actors of ‘equal’ status and position.





The table below is compiled to present the reported changes from this action research:

<i>Convener organization / MSP issue</i>	<i>Output</i>	<i>Reported changes</i>
<i>Both Ends: Community rights and Palm Oil Land Planning, Indonesia</i>	<i>Spatial Map</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Trust as an emergent property among NGOs, the local and national government.</i></li> <li>• <i>Decision making rules invented along the way</i></li> <li>• <i>Communities still perceive themselves as powerless</i></li> </ul>
<i>Both Ends: RSPO Dispute Settlement Facility (DSF)</i>	<i>Conflict manual</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Capacity needs for DSF identified: education, communication</i></li> <li>• <i>Companies need to understand the DSF, particularly the recognition of customary rights of indigenous peoples</i></li> <li>• <i>Local community training needs: awareness of their legal rights; traditional leaders to understand customary and legal rights; support to allow them to choose their own representatives through customary decision making</i></li> <li>• <i>Suggestion for DSF to establish a fund to pay for costs of a mediator</i></li> </ul>
<i>FTO: Citrus value chain / Conflicting interests</i>	<i>Manual</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>MSP train image to clarify interdependencies of key stakeholders in value chain</i></li> <li>• <i>Tools adapted for literacy level primary audience</i></li> <li>• <i>Manual 'How to conduct capacity needs assessment of citrus farmer-based organizations in Fair Trade Value chains' developed</i></li> </ul>
<i>FTO: Fair Trade assessments / Stakeholder engagement</i>	<i>Manual</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>FTO manual on assessments developed in Asia and tested in South Africa</i></li> <li>• <i>More clarity on stakeholder power dynamics in Fair Trade value chains and assessments</i></li> <li>• <i>Awareness that transparent and regular communication, especially on market developments, can create stakeholder cohesion and more regular engagement with Fair Trade principles</i></li> </ul>
<i>ICCO: ACOFOP / community influence &amp; gender focus</i>	<i>Tested tools + description</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Gender strategy developed based on participatory process using the Four Quadrants of Change model.</i></li> <li>• <i>Organizational development: deeper reflection on successes and failures of ACOFOP and priority setting</i></li> <li>• <i>Women and family interests recognized as mutually reinforcing</i></li> <li>• <i>Women's voice more heard in organizational fora</i></li> </ul>

<i>ICCO: Seaweeds value chain</i>	<i>Tested tools + description</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger awareness of position &amp; power in network</li> <li>• Increased risk awareness</li> <li>• Succeeded to explore power with provincial police, thus a relationship change</li> <li>• More numbers + more organization = more power</li> </ul>
<i>ETC: Biocultural Community Protocol (BCP) in Kenya</i>	<i>Guide on using BCPs in MSPs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MSP allowed trust building among different ethnic communities</li> <li>• The MSP meetings enabled some level of trust building between the District Commissioner and the Save Lamu coalition</li> <li>• Adaption of the power cube tool to a local 'Lamu power house' enabled community members to understand the concept of hidden power</li> <li>• The BCP enhances the MSP process and prepares the community in negotiation when other powerful stakeholders, e.g. oil companies come in</li> <li>• A manual to integrate BCP and MSP is drafted</li> </ul>
<i>ETC: Biocultural Community Protocol (BCP) in Ghana</i>	<i>Guide on using BCPs in MSPs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice educated the communities on contemporary and customary laws and conventions on their stewardship rights</li> <li>• MSP and BCP processes can be combined concurrently</li> <li>• The BCP represents community interests and provides standards of interaction for external actors to negotiate with them</li> <li>• A manual to integrate BCP and MSP is drafted</li> </ul>
<i>Cordaid: Role of CSOs in Oil Spill Regulatory Mechanism</i>	<i>Empowerment of NACGOND to operate strategically in MSP</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement of management structure of NACGOND, to give members more equal footing (Equal voting rights not yet solved)</li> <li>• Relationships with oil companies is changing from confrontational to more cooperation – without co-optation</li> </ul>
<i>Cordaid HBC Home Based Care / Commitment</i>	<i>Agreement on minimum care package for home-based care volunteers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women participation in decision making of the home-based care policies</li> <li>• Increased awareness of Alliance about desired policies for home-based care</li> </ul>
<i>Waste: Evaluation Franchise concepts in Sanitation Services</i>	<i>Evaluation of franchise concepts.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement on creation, appointment and selection of an independent sanitation ombudsman who will oversee agreements and effective action</li> </ul>

### **Make no mistake!**

We end this insight on changes for disadvantaged stakeholders by looking at the court process in Malaysia for the local communities. After 12 years of deliberations, the high court of Sabah and Sarawak spoke a judgement on land conflicts between local communities in Malaysia and an oil palm company (March 2010). The court recognized the native customary rights of local communities to their lands. This gave the local community a basis to take retaliatory steps against the company. By wielding this "power of protest" as a collective body, they were able to cripple the companies' local



operations and work schedule. When asked about the imbalance of power, the company representative said: “Make no mistake. The power is with the community. We cannot go in the plantation at all. They have managed to stall everything”. As Ramy Bulan writes: This brings home the fact that everyone has some power and he or she can claim that space and exercise that “power over” another. The resources of the community lay not in economic power, but in their unity and “One voice”.

 **Watch video**

**Ramy Bulan**  
University of Malaya  
Malaysia

## Conclusions

The external evaluators, Russell Kerkhoven and Marc Coenders, in their report ([link](#)) indicate that the TLP Power in MSPs “..is an exciting and explorative attempt to explore an often recognized, but seldom addressed issue of power in multi-stakeholder programmes. Although there are many academic studies of power, there is only limited evidence that indicates impact at the community or stakeholder level. The details of this impact appear through the reports of the action researchers: better or different working relations between the powerless and those who have more power emerged”.

In this concluding chapter, we come to answer the four central learning questions agreed upon by the seven convening organizations:

***1. How can local, or ‘beneficiary’ organizations, which are usually less powerful stakeholders, be empowered to operate strategically in a multi-stakeholder setting?***

Local, disadvantaged organizations can utilize their ‘power within’ and their ‘power with’ when engaging with external stakeholders. Power is deeply influenced by culture, beliefs and norms, also referred to as ‘invisible power’. Much of the stakeholder interactions in the MSPs are visible, but these interactions are only “the top of the iceberg”. The iceberg depicts the complexity of power dynamics –often material, tangible and agency-related power dynamics are the visible top of the iceberg. What lies below the water is a huge proportion of dynamics that we cannot see well –structural forms of power that we internalize, cultural language, values and ceremonies that influence stakeholders and that are difficult to change. Power often resides beneath the surface and this is where local organisations have an advantage as they often deeply know and exhibit these cultural norms and beliefs. In some cases, these deeply rooted structures; culture, behaviour and norms can lead to conservative, ‘entrenched’ positions. It may not be easy to change these but there are experiences where using theatre or cartoons can create entrances to discuss these positions.

The ‘power with’ refers not only to having strength in numbers, but also refers to the quality and extensiveness of networks that stakeholders have access to. Local organisations can be empowered by supporting their capacities to connect and engage with other stakeholders. These can be likeminded stakeholders who together can form a common front, but also stakeholders with completely different interests and mindsets. Developing the capability to interact and network with these different stakeholders can be a real asset in becoming a more strategic player in an MSP.

***2. How can power differences between stakeholders be taken into account in the development of multi-stakeholder cooperative processes in order to ensure effective participation of the weaker/ smaller/ less powerful stakeholders?***

Learning by doing. There are some proverbs that symbolize ‘power with’ within the MSP: “The song will emerge from the dance” – we don’t know how things will go, until we engage in the MSP.

Many action researchers indicated the importance of NGOs to support communities. This can take the form of providing financial resources, facilitation of meetings, application of power analysis tools or capacity building to ensure their effective participation in the MSP. Several researchers produced a manual or a guide that will enable the less powerful stakeholders to deal with power differences.

Is a good facilitator one who ensures effective participation of powerless stakeholders? As a minimum, he or she has to know the context and be familiar with specific power analysis tools throughout the MSP process. Facilitators come in and locate themselves in the MSP. Can they be fully objective and neutral, when the aim of their support is to empower the less powerful? Can they connect to all stakeholders, build trust, but also challenge stakeholders? Researchers in this TLP stated that it is important that facilitators are able to create the space for all stakeholders to participate, to be heard and seen. It's an art of hosting, of being inclusive. But who is reflecting on the facilitator's neutrality? Should neutrality and trustworthiness be primarily acknowledged by the local organizations, often the less powerful within the MSP? Often the community members don't trust 'a neutral person'; there must be a hidden (power) agenda!

***3. Given the growing involvement of local organizations in MSPs, what are the implications for relationships between local CSO and Northern agencies?***

***4. How should Northern agencies deal with power imbalances when participating in or being related to MSPs?***

These two questions were not addressed in great depth during the TLP. For some northern agencies, it may be difficult to get involved in sensitive conflicts or sensitive MSPs. Can northern agencies remain committed to such MSPs, even when the going gets tough? "Don't go into the kitchen, when you can't take the heat".

One of the roles for northern (donor) organizations is to allocate resources for capacity building on power dynamics in MSPs within their budgets. In some cases, northern agencies could advocate that their allies in the north also assume advocacy roles. Cordaid could mobilize its Catholic constituency in the North some of whom are shareholders of Shell and form a pressure group that would be visible in the Annual General Meeting of shareholders of Shell. These shareholders could request attention for the Nigeria situation. This would be an act of solidarity with churches in Nigeria.

## Epilogue

**“We can’t be creative if we refuse to be confused,” says Margaret Wheatley. If you go on a learning journey with over 20 people representing different organisational, cultural and academic backgrounds there is bound to be confusion every now and then. We experienced some confusion about the definitions of power, or about the roles of civil society in policy advocacy that differ from one context to another. The question is whether the price of confusion is worth it, in the end. The external evaluators of this TLP concluded that there are ‘impressive nodes of learning and inspirational results within the network of people and organisations that are part of this TLP’. This indicates that some of the emerging confusion, in the end, resolved into new insights and practices. The creativity involved was also demonstrated by the adaptations of research design and tools by many action researchers.**

Participants of this TLP need to find new ways and networks to maintain, nurture and expand these newly gained insights and practices – as the TLP has come to an end. We hope that convenors, action researchers and other interested people will find the manuals, videos and documents inspiring to continue to reflect and learn. And take this learning attitude into new places where they will engage with new people in new professional challenges. Many of the convener organisations have on-going programmes where the learning from this TLP will be continued. This ranges from the international value chain work of Fair Trade Original, to ETC’s work on Bio-Cultural Protocols, to Both Ends’ work with various global commodity roundtables, and so on. The formal network that has been created through this TLP will cease to exist, but the connections made will be a sure asset in any further work that people want to undertake around the topic of power in multi-stakeholder processes.

### **What others said**

The external evaluation of this TLP helped to see three design principles that were (sometimes unconsciously) used in this action research:

- Diversity – the range of cases, the different and sometimes changing contexts;
- Co-creation – the TLP as a collective effort;
- Emergence – the on-going process of sense making; producing a story together.

Three important conditions for actions research using cases were met according to the evaluators. First, the researchers possessed a significant level of local situational knowledge and competence to act in complex processes. Second, the availability of a framework and a diverse toolkit to design and execute their action research. Third, the guidance provided by the convening group and external reference group through theory-based insights, exchange and joint reflection, and through coaching arrangements.

The evaluation further concluded that the TLP generated a substantial number of written outputs and material to report on the initial research questions – despite the in-built complexity of working with these three design principles. Balancing coherence (one set of research and action questions) and context-specificity (allowing deviations depending on the situation) was valued by participants. Still, more work could have been done to help participants work through their individual research questions.

### **What’s next in terms of connecting?**

If this booklet makes you curious to learn more or connect to any of the organisations or individuals involved, don’t hesitate to contact any of the convening or facilitating organisations. Much material of the TLP will be available at the Ning of the Change Alliance, <http://thechangealliance.ning.com/>, the global network for multi-stakeholder engagement

for development (requires login). If you are interested to get more resources about multi-stakeholder processes, try the MSP portal of Wageningen UR, Centre for Development Innovation. If your interest is to explore power dynamics in more detail, try the Powerhouse Ning, a community of people interested in action and change through power analysis. Insert link if you want to learn more about Biocultural Community Protocols, see [www.community-protocols.org](http://www.community-protocols.org).

### **What's next in terms of research?**

From this TLP, several new questions are emerging that could guide future initiatives in this area:

1. It has become clear that the type of MSP greatly influences the possibilities of low-power stakeholders to exercise influence. Future research should help to specify for various types of MSPs the opportunities and limitations to influence. In other words, which strategies for influencing are available for which type of MSP? Which strategy will most likely yield results, under which conditions?
2. Future research should answer the question under which conditions MSPs offer enough chances for low-power stakeholders to exercise influence, and under which conditions this will not take place. In the latter case low-power stakeholder could decide not to participate in an MSP.
3. Traditional leadership, norms and values embedded in culture sometimes appear to give opportunities for low-power stakeholders to exercise power. Future research could clarify the conditions under which this can happen.
4. Media appear to play a major role in MSPs. Future research could examine the role of the media, as well as clarify the possibilities that media offer to low-power stakeholders to realize their goals.
5. The possible roles of Northern civil society organisations (and opportunities and dilemma's implied) deserve more highlighting. It was one of the four main questions of this TLP, but it remains factually unanswered.



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