

The GAP project

The objectives of the GAP project are driven by the need for fisheries stakeholders, scientists and policy makers to work together more effectively to address the challenges of sustainable fisheries management. GAP aims to incorporate the knowledge and skills of fishermen in research that provides the scientific advice to policy makers.

Phase 1 aims to build the foundations for participation of fishermen in research. Each scientific partner is paired with an industry partner. Together, they will plan a research case study for implementation in Phase 2.

Phase 2 is a research project aiming to deliver innovative tools and methods to integrate the knowledge and skills of scientists and fishermen.

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This document provides a summary of a full report that can be downloaded from our website: Mackinson, S., Neville, S., Raicevich, S., and Worsøe Clausen, L. (eds) 2008. Good practice guide to participatory research between fisheries stakeholders and scientists. GAP project deliverable 1, 23pp.

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Good Practice Guide Participatory Research in Fisheries Science

Active engagement of fisheries stakeholders through their participation in scientific research provides a way to help reduce tension and build collaborative working relationships that yield long-term benefits to resource management.



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Moving towards more sustainable fisheries

Fisheries stakeholders frequently challenge the validity or interpretation of scientific advice because the policy decisions arising from it can have a negative impact on their lives. This 'tension' between society, science and policy is particularly evident when environmental sustainability concerns appear in conflict with maintaining livelihoods of fishermen and their industry.

This document provides a summary of the outcomes of an international workshop attended by fishermen, scientists and other invited experts. The participants experience was used to describe the benefits, processes and challenges for engaging in participatory research. For the full document and further information please consult our GAP project website www.gap1.eu (see back page for further project information).

What is participatory research?

Participatory research in fisheries science involves fishermen and scientists working together in the planning and development of fisheries research. The common aim is to improve the knowledge base and rigour of scientific advice provided to policy makers.

Participation by fishermen in scientific research involves more than just data collection. It also includes:

- Deciding what research needs to be carried out, as well as how it will be done
- Participants having a say in the design of the participation process
- Adapting the process to individuals involved
- Joint ownership of data and results
- Co-education of fishers and scientists
- Long term engagement



- **Effective communication.** Promote attitudes that facilitate collaboration and effectively communicate the value of participatory research to high-level policy makers in a measured and realistic way, otherwise expectations will be too high and we will fail to deliver.
- **Make the changes sustainable.** Build the administrative and logistical capacity to enable stakeholders to participate effectively in research over the long term. Local successes are good, but longer term sustainability relies on scaling up from a regional to international level.
- **Evaluate.** Focus on the evaluation of the participation process, not just the scientific outcomes, and learn from the experience to ensure the full promise of participation in research is realised.



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What are the benefits?

How to move forward?

- **Make a difference.** Ensure the process has a positive effect on the relationship between fisheries stakeholders, scientists, and policy makers. The contribution by stakeholders must make a real difference to the rigour of scientific advice, and must be recognised by high-level policy makers, otherwise efforts will continue to be undermined by stakeholders' mistrust of the use of science in decision making.
- **Create opportunities.** Develop strategic alliances and influence National and European research policies in a clear and persuasive manner so appropriate opportunities for further development are created.
- **Maintain momentum.** Apply coherent and continuous effort at all levels, because enabling effective participation by stakeholders is a long-term process and sufficient momentum needs to be developed to avoid derailment by short-term political attention cycles.

Improving sustainability

- Greater compliance with management decisions as fishermen have a feeling of ownership over the data provided to decision makers.
- Longer term agreements can be reached due to improved communication, trust and respect between fisheries stakeholders, researchers and decision makers.
- Development of co-management arrangements catalysed by successful and mature participatory research processes.

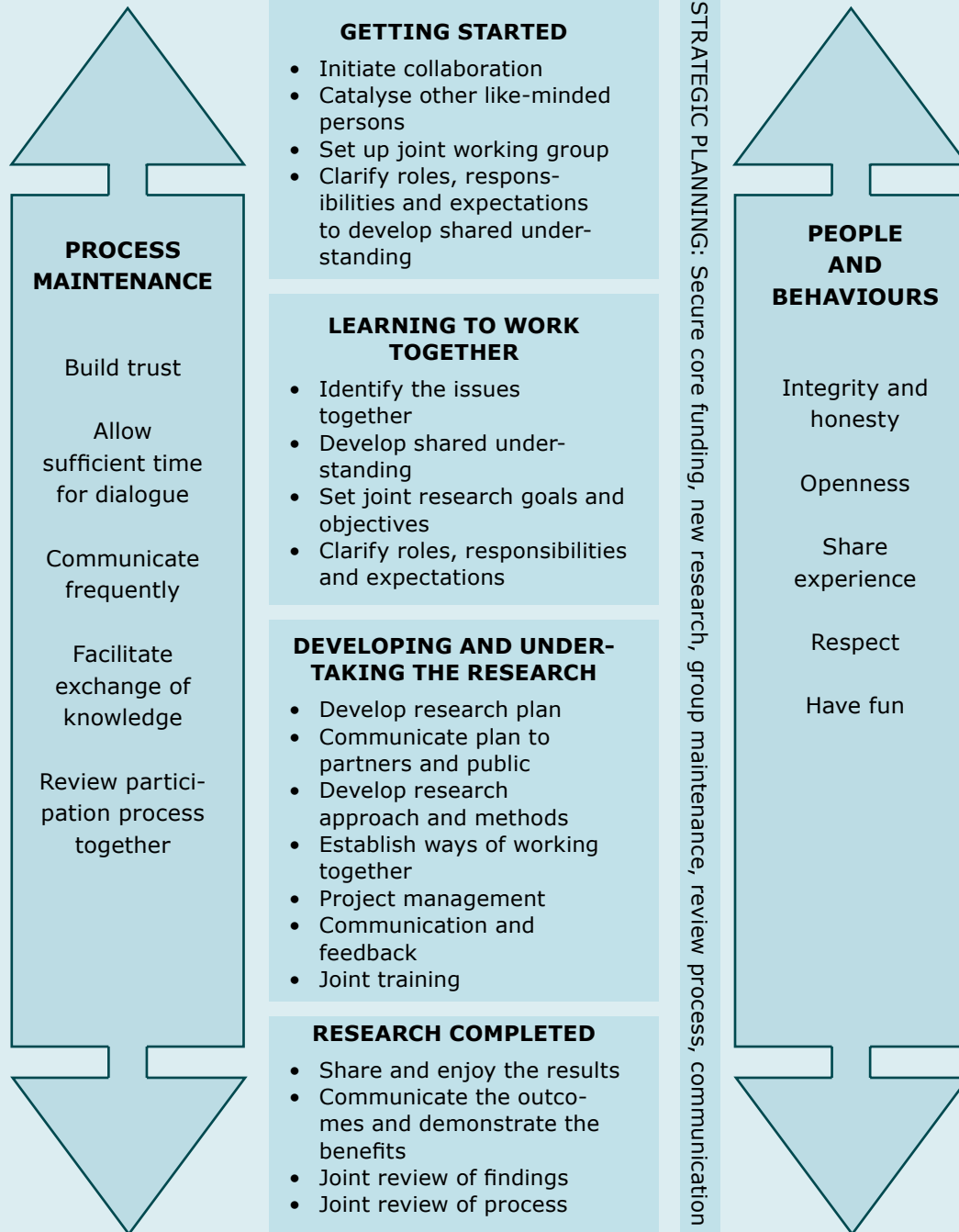
Making better use of available information

- Identification of research priorities of direct relevance to resource management.
- Research is more focussed on finding solutions that lead to more sustainable management of the marine environment.
- More efficient use of available knowledge by partnering with existing activities.

Improving knowledge and understanding

- Improved knowledge and understanding of issues of common concern.
- Catalyst for new ideas and innovative research methods.
- Co-education of fisheries stakeholders and researchers.
- Changing perceptions and attitudes.
- Builds trust between fishermen and public research institutions.
- Mutual respect gained through shared understanding of challenges, expectations and views.
- Fosters long-term cultural shifts in attitudes, helping to engage wider society.

Key stages in the participatory research process



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Key messages from the workshop

- Identify and involve stakeholders at the earliest planning stage when they can have a real influence over the design of the process.
- Make the process as open and transparent as possible.
- Understand, respect and give equal weight to all forms of knowledge.
- Adapt the process to the individuals involved and work together to overcome problems.
- Manage expectations from the outset.
- Effective two-way communication at regular intervals, and consistency of people involved are critical to success.
- Highly skilled leaders are required to motivate and inspire others, and to manage the process appropriately.
- Ensure key outcomes are effectively communicated to stakeholders and the wider community, and that they make a real difference to informing policy.
- Short, medium and long-term approaches required.
- Finding the right level of participation is essential. It must be beneficial to all involved.