



FACT SHEET: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

Multi-stakeholder collaboration (MSC) is an increasingly popular tool for addressing collective problems. While the increasing attention on this method is valuable, this also means that there is an increasing diversity of perspectives and resources available about how to define or execute MSC. This fact sheet provides an overview of existing documents and case studies available to serve as a reference for newcomers to MSC theory and practice.

Definitions

We define MSC as a process that brings together distinct organizations or individuals from various backgrounds into a shared formal or informal institution. This institution has a purpose to address a collective problem that affects all involved.

Various organizations and individuals have capitalized on this approach and tailored it down to manuals detailing its use. It is referred to as multi-stakeholder partnerships, process, or approach. In practice, it is often used when working with stakeholders who otherwise would not work together. The approach is, “built on an understanding of individual shared concerns that promotes information-sharing as well as creative win-win solutions.” Some consider it a “form of governance... a way in which groups of people can make decisions and take action for the collective good, be it a local, national, or international scale.” As such, it can take the form of short-term consultation or a multi-year process.

Existing Resources and Key Lessons

The following resources are available to provide an overview of MSC and how to execute it:

- [Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration: How Government, Business, and Non-Governmental Leaders Transform Complex Challenges into New Possibilities](#)
This guide from the One Earth Future Foundation provides an overview of MSC procedures executed by the author in issue areas relating to peace and security, including operating in conflict-affected countries. It describes a generic process, centered around the “5Ps” of MSC, and case studies of how this process operates with community-level stakeholders, national actors, and international actors.
- [The MSP Guide: How to Design and Facilitate Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships](#)
This guide is from the Centre of Development Innovation at the Wageningen University & Research Center. It provides a comprehensive guide on how to design, facilitate, and practice MSC with tools and key principles to help those directly involved. Additionally, it provides several examples demonstrating the diversity of actors and issue-areas that can be incorporated in MSC.
- [Multi-Stakeholder Processes for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding: A Manual](#)
This guide is from the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict and specifies the ways in which MSC can be applied to conflict settings. In particular, it explains MSC from the perspective of civil society organizations working in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. It provides four case studies based on interviews with MSC practitioners in Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.
- [Navigating Complex Change: How We Can Master the Challenges of Stakeholder Collaboration, Collective Leadership Institute](#)
This Collective Leadership Institute guide focuses on supporting MSC on sustainable development between private sector, public sector, and civil society organizations. Their approach revolves around their core methodology, the Collective Leadership Compass, as a tool to measure, plan, and assess MSC. This report provides case studies in sustainable textiles and economic development.

Photos, left to right: Colombian citizens come together to engage in reconciliation and peace; investors, entrepreneurs, NGOs, and government network at the Somaliland Renewable Energy Forum; participants engage in discussion on critical issues facing women, peace and security. Photos by Jean-Pierre Larroque, One Earth Future Foundation.

FACT SHEET: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

- [Synthesis Report from the e-Consultation on Cooperative Multistakeholder Action: Constructive or Confusing Global Governance](#)

This guide was produced by the Stanley Foundation in collaboration with the Stimson Center. It reviews findings from a seven-week consultation process with eighty-two professionals working in global governance. It specifics how MSC is particularly helpful in conducting global governance, especially from a non-profit or non-governmental organization perspective.

Each of these guides detail key principles or elements that define MSC. They emphasize that the ultimate goal is to affect systemic or institutional change. In order to do so, it is necessary to have stakeholders from throughout the system present, including representatives from government, civil society, business, and others. Working across sectors necessarily means confronting differences in perceived and actual power amongst stakeholders. These imbalances provide room for conflict between stakeholders which, if facilitated correctly, MSC is prepared to address. Effective and agreed-upon systems of communication help to ease power imbalances and conflict between stakeholders. Learning is at the core of MSC and all the manuals stress the importance of incorporating a strong monitoring and evaluation component.

They also point out that MSC is not appropriate for every situation and that the approach comes with some challenges. For example, MSC should not be pursued if the problem can be solved by one actor without the input of others. Some challenges include hidden agendas and differing expectations among stakeholders. Power dynamics within the group can “result in worsening the position of vulnerable groups,” or the “demonizing” of other stakeholders within the MSC. The manuals point out that getting stakeholders to genuinely listen to each other is a larger challenge than encouraging stakeholders to talk. The prevailing political context, especially in fragile or conflict-affected states, is important and can shape what stakeholders bring to MSC. Many challenges are the result from a failure of planning ahead; for example, inadequate follow-up or no contingency plans to confront unexpected events.

Case studies

The flexibility of MSC means that it can be adapted to a wide variety of needs. Below are links to case studies that demonstrate this point.

- 1 [Case study on MSC in Afghanistan and Case study on Pacific Area Special Operations Conference in *Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration: How Government, Business, and Non-Governmental Leaders Transform Complex Challenges into New Possibilities*, One Earth Future Foundation](#)
- 2 [Burden-Sharing Multi-Level Governance: The Study of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, One Earth Future Foundation and Oceans Beyond Piracy](#)
- 3 [The Role of Kenya's Private Sector in Peacebuilding: The Case of the 2013 Election Cycle, One Earth Future Foundation](#)
- 4 [Case studies on Kyrgyzstan, Women, Peace, and Security in the Pacific Region, Conflict Prevention in Latin America and the Caribbean, and Electoral Violence in Kenya in, *The MSP Guide: How to Design and Facilitate Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships*, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict](#)
- 5 [Tamil Nadu Multi-Stakeholder Programme: South India, Ethical Trading Initiative](#)
- 6 [“Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for a Sustainable Coffee Sector: Meeting the Challenge of U.S. Anti-Trust Law,” InterInternational Institute for Sustainable Development](#)