

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

A STAP Brief



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The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is committed to enhancing integration across sectors, catalysing innovation to alter systems that degrade the global environment and leveraging multi-stakeholder coalitions to influence transformational change across scales. This Guidance Note offers advice on the **principles and practices that contribute to effective design and implementation of multi-stakeholder dialogue (MSD)** to address GEF priorities. The primary emphasis is on the use of MSD processes to contribute to regional or global coalitions for transformational change that integrate private sector actors, including multinational corporations, industry associations and private financial institutions.

We use the term MSD to refer to **sustained dialogue enabling collaborative action among diverse**

stakeholders at multiple scales, explicitly aiming for transformational change in systems that can generate global environmental benefits. We do so in the context of four models of transformation found in the GEF portfolio (Figure 1).

Barriers to scaling may include lack of knowledge about innovations; institutional and market barriers, including rules and regulations; and unsupportive cultural values and social norms. MSD can address these barriers to achieve integration across sectors, international exchange and learning, increased policy commitment, enhanced private sector engagement and financing, and – ultimately – new levels of enduring outcome and impact.

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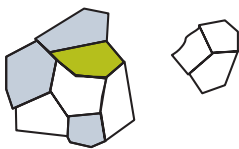
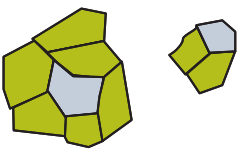
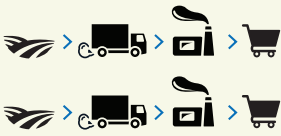





Model	Piloting innovations	Scaled to transform	Nature of model	Private sector role examples
Production system			Scaling out knowledge of new resource management practices from various test landscapes or seascapes to all of a biome with necessary institutional changes like tenure security or use rights.	Better land management practices extended across borders to entire Miombo dryland biome, or entire Amazon. Private sector as farmers, industry organisations, fertiliser/ machinery/seed suppliers.
Value chain			Aggregating through coordinated supply chains , so incentives from demand alter production methods, requiring scaling up through institutional changes, and possible scaling deep to consumer choices.	Supply chain management (e.g. cocoa or artisanal mining) supported by market demand for sustainability, premiums for producers, standard setting, monitoring and public reporting to increase transparency.
Financing system			Aggregating demand for, and returns to, finance up to a scale that justifies large investment vehicles to fund new interventions that scale out sustainable production or adaptation, with bankable returns.	Green bonds for adaptation. Private sector in finance provision, risk assessment, broker and aggregator roles, as well as business model development and implementation, and financial system accountability.
Service provision			Recipients of services (e.g. transport, waste, energy) respond positively to disruptive innovations ; one or more of these scales out to dominate the market; may require scaling up to address the regulatory environment.	Rideshare services (e.g. Uber) for private transport; Internet banking for small loans; food waste to fertiliser; microgrid energy services. Private sector as entrepreneurial innovator and service provider.

Figure 1: Models of scaling in GEF investments involving the private sector

Researchers and seasoned practitioners have identified a number of core principles to inform good practice:

- Critically assess the context for system transformation.** MSDs are not a panacea, and care must be taken to first confirm that the conditions are suitable for sustained dialogue that could lead to transformation.
- Make use of existing processes or coalitions, where possible.** Organisers may prefer to create a new process with a distinct identity, but often the better option is to strengthen, link, or address gaps in existing multi-stakeholder processes.
- Address power dynamics intentionally.** Organisers and conveners of MSD processes need to assess the relationships among stakeholders, and their differing access to resources of power and influence, to promote greater inclusiveness and equity in the dialogue process.
- Enable flexible programme implementation.** MSD processes can support all stages of the investment cycle, ideally setting the stage for enduring impacts through long-term collaboration well beyond the life of the investment.

- Embed monitoring, evaluation and learning.** A good theory of change provides a foundation for monitoring and evaluating the contributions an MSD has made in practice, the challenges faced and the degree to which it is delivering.
- Plan beyond the initial investment.** Very often, MSDs need to continue after the supporting project or programme has been implemented. This means planning for an exit strategy that includes investment in the capacities of players to carry the process forward.

Robust analysis is essential to confirm whether an MSD is an appropriate approach to the challenge at hand and to guide consequent MSD design choices. Clarity of purpose is the fundamental design consideration, guiding the choices of whom to engage and how. A well-facilitated process will be ineffective without the right people engaged, and the right people gathered with an ill-defined purpose will not yield results. Table 1 summarises the key issues to be considered in MSD design. More detailed guidance on each element can be found in the full STAP Advisory Document.

Table 1: Key issues and overarching questions to ask in MSD design

Design element	Key issues	Overarching questions
Purpose	Goals	Are views on the goals and consequent possible solutions sufficiently aligned to define a shared convening purpose for an MSD?
	Scope	Is the scope of the MSD broad enough to engage the stakeholders needed yet focused enough to enable subsequent action?
	Scale	Is the scale at which the MSD will operate appropriate to bring necessary stakeholders to the table who can enact change and connect across levels?
People	Capacity for change	What are the roles and attitudes of different actors in enacting or enabling change, and who should be directly engaged in the MSD?
	Equity and power	How can the interests of potential winners or losers from changes be best represented, and how can power and capacity imbalances be managed?
	Networks of influence and trust	Are relevant networks and bridging organisations engaged to provide trust, and are the best entry points in government and industry identified?
Process	Initiation and convening	Is a new platform or convener needed, and who has the legitimacy and capacity to convene and sustain the right stakeholders in the MSD?
	Approach	What types of facilitation skills and processes are needed, over how long, and with what governance mechanisms, to ensure the MSD achieves its purpose?
	Funding and continuity	What resources are needed to support the MSD and build the capacity for it to continue, if necessary, after the initial investment?

A key determinant of effectiveness in MSD processes is how they foster and incorporate social learning.

A purposeful and transparent approach to monitoring and evaluating is required, both for the quality of the MSD itself and for the outcomes to which it contributes. Because large-scale, transformational changes involve a wide range of contributing factors, the aim is to identify instances where MSD has made a significant contribution rather than attribute it as the sole or primary cause.

Effective MSD can be a fundamental enabler of coalitions and collaborative actions that contribute to transformational change at multiple scales. MSD should thus be considered squarely among the core approaches the GEF employs to pursue scaling of impact.

This brief is adapted from the full STAP Advisory Document: Ratner, B.D. and Stafford Smith, M. 2020. Multi-stakeholder dialogue for transformational change. Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel to the Global Environment Facility. Washington, DC. <https://stapgef.org/resources/advisory-documents/multi-stakeholder-dialogue-transformational-change>

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