

6 PROGRAMME DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Earlier chapters have presented all the key elements of an observer programme. This final chapter gives a brief overview on how to put all the elements together. Three aspects are considered: design, implementation and maintenance.

6.1 Designing a fishery observer programme

6.1.1 Objectives and functional environment

There are two main sets of influences that condition the framework of a programme.

- Policy decisions (and complementary decisions at management, science, MCS/compliance and observer operations levels) - possibly reflected through the fishery management plan that lays down programme objectives.
- The situation (or environment) within which the programme must function, i.e. the factors that will shape the programme strategy and ultimately define its success or failure.

Decisions that underlie an observer programme were outlined in the Introduction, and programme objectives were discussed in Chapter 1. It is important to define objectives in a way that is easy to understand, but which is sufficiently comprehensive to meet the needs of observer data users. Over-ambitious objectives may lead to disappointment within and outside of the observer programme.

Once the objectives have been defined, they must continually be assessed in terms of the functional environment of the programme. This involves attention to the following components.

- a) Physical environment**
Conditions of the area covered – e.g. temperate or tropical location of ports.
- b) Biological environment**
For example, the key species, by-catch and predictions of catch rates.
- c) Fishing activity**
The resource users e.g. vessel nationality, size of vessel, fishing methods.
- d) Owner organization**
Background information on the government FMA that will be home to the programme.
- e) Other data collection programmes**
Any other programmes that collect data for fisheries management.
- f) The potential observers**
Consider skills, abilities, professionalism and qualifications.

g) National level policies and objectives

Consider wider political, social and economic policies that may influence the programme, e.g. the need to address national employment problems, including gender or empowerment questions.

h) International level

Is the fishery sector party to any international or regional agreements that may influence the scope of the programme?

i) Legal instruments

What legal instruments exist, both informal and formal, such as acts, regulations, tribal rights, etc.?

l) Financing options

Where will the programme finance come from? If from donor support, how will donor objectives influence the strategy of the programme? If from industry, should joint management be considered?

m) Stakeholders

Who will care about the programme? Draw up a list of all the possible stakeholders and consider current links and historic problems between them, and gauge their interest in the programme.

6.1.2 Analysing the framework

Assessment of the functional environment helps to clarify programme prospects and problems. These can be further clarified through SWOT analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat analysis). SWOT analysis looks at all the aspects of the programme in relation to the required outputs and simply asks logical questions about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (Table 16). SWOT analysis serves as a kind of reality check. Are threats too big to overcome or can they be overcome by opportunities? If the threats are considered too big, then should programme objectives be reconsidered?

The analysis might contribute to a background paper that defines the intentions and plans for the programme for circulation among potential stakeholders for feedback. A possible structure of a background paper would include:

- Name of programme, background and objectives
- Situation analysis and overall strategy
- Proposed organization and delivery
- Project approach
- How to address sustainability
- Financial requirements

This paper can also serve as a basis for securing donor assistance to the programme. Following feedback from stakeholders, decisions can be made on its feasibility or on any programme re-design.

Table 16 How to make a SWOT analysis

SWOT	Questions	Comments
Strengths	<input type="checkbox"/> What are your advantages and strong points? <input type="checkbox"/> What do you do well? <input type="checkbox"/> How does your structure support your function? <input type="checkbox"/> Can you list the skills that you have that support your function? <input type="checkbox"/> Who helps you?	Consider this from your own point of view and from the point of view of the people you deal with. Be realistic.
Weaknesses	<input type="checkbox"/> What could be improved? <input type="checkbox"/> What is done badly? <input type="checkbox"/> What should be avoided? <input type="checkbox"/> What skills do you lack? <input type="checkbox"/> What equipment do you lack?	Again this should be considered from both an internal and external perspective. Do other people perceive weaknesses that you don't see? Do your colleagues do any better? It is best to be realistic now, and face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.
Opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/> What good changes do you face? <input type="checkbox"/> What are the existing resources within the organization that can help you improve? <input type="checkbox"/> What are other sections doing and can you get any good ideas from them? <input type="checkbox"/> What training could be available to help you?	Useful opportunities can come from such things as: <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in technology on both a broad and narrow scale <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in government policy related to your field <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in social patterns, employee profiles, etc.
Threats	<input type="checkbox"/> What obstacles do you face? <input type="checkbox"/> What structures or functions may make your objectives fail? <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have the required skills to perform your function? <input type="checkbox"/> Is changing technology threatening your position? <input type="checkbox"/> Who makes your job impossible to do?	Carrying out this analysis will often be illuminating - both in terms of pointing out what needs to be done, and in putting problems into perspective. Make a risk analysis by defining what could go wrong.

6.2 An implementation project

If the chances for a successful programme are deemed good, a project will be necessary in order to implement it. Project duration might be anywhere from one to five years, depending on the scale and scope of the programme to be established.

Planning is vital, and a project logical framework (logframe) approach should be used. A pilot phase, incorporating also pilot work on a sampling strategy (Section 4.5), should first be implemented. Trials during this phase will be used to establish work plans, working practices, codes of conduct, training manuals and guides, and consideration of employment options and other administrative systems for the programme. The pilot phase might run for any amount of time, but usually a period of 12 months should be sufficient to complete trial work.

Evaluation and revision of the project will occur in light of the lessons learnt during the pilot phase. This may require adjusting the objectives in relation to the initial mandate of the programme and what is practically achievable. Monitoring and evaluation as described in Chapter 3 should continue during the full project set-up phase and as the programme matures.

It will always be necessary to verify that the programme is producing quality data outputs to fulfil its objectives, that the objectives are still in tune with the management system for the fishery, and that an observer programme is still the best way to achieve these objectives.

6.3 Maintaining the programme

Observer programme managers will always need to assure all stakeholders that the programme remains sustainable. This will require a dynamic

and flexible approach to allow the programme to adapt to changing circumstances. This flexibility combined with contact with stakeholders, annual planning, target setting, annual review and feedback will help to assure sustainability.

The ownership of the programme will also have a major impact on sustainability; a good programme will have a broad ownership network. That means that the scientists, compliance officers, managers, industry and observers will all feel that the programme is theirs.

Realistic budgeting is also required for sustainability. The aim should always be to provide value for money, and in this respect every programme needs to find a balance between what it produces as outputs and the personnel and technology it employs. High-tech solutions may be right for one programme but not for another, but they are only tools to enable observers to do their work.

Outputs are what the programme will ultimately be judged on. Information quality and timeliness must almost become the motto of the programme, and every effort should be made to uphold it.

Finally, observers are always at the centre of every observer programme, and they will require recognition and reward when they have done a good job. Life at sea is often difficult, and support and feedback from the shore staff is vital to maintain morale and a sense of purpose in what can easily become a very monotonous existence. Knowing that they are part of a bigger picture and that their contribution is important and appreciated will motivate observers to achieve excellent results and to keep going under what can be very arduous conditions.



Your observers matter, treat them well (S.L. Davies).

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