

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

Supporting Global Standard Setting for Sustainable Aquaculture

Aquaculture is booming around the world. About half of the seafood we eat today is grown in a net, a pond, or a tank, and the percentage is growing quickly.



By Merrick Hoben



and David Plumb

stakeholders together, its focus on metrics-based standards that measure actual impacts on the environment, and its high level of transparency. It provides a window into the many opportunities and challenges of developing voluntary standards that will have the ability to shift behavior in a global industry.

CBI is working with World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to facilitate the development of global standards that address the key negative environmental and social impacts from this expanding industry. The process, called the Aquaculture Dialogues, takes a consensus-based approach to creating credible, voluntary standards that will transform farm operations toward more sustainable production of salmon, shrimp, tilapia, mussels, and eight other species. More than 2,000 people, including farmers, conservationists, community activists, academics, and government officials, participate in the roundtable discussions, called “Dialogues.”

The process is unique because of its global reach, its consensus-based decision making process that brings

CBI is providing WWF overall guidance on the process, and facilitating dialogue and decision making in seven species-specific dialogues. Draft standards for three species are nearly complete, and the remainder are due out in 2010.

In the following, we reflect on some of our insights from this important work as it develops.

I. Building Ownership

WWF, the world’s largest conservation organization, convened the Dialogues and coordinates them. For the standards to be successful in shifting industry practices, WWF can’t be the only organization committed to them. Shared ownership of the process by Dialogue participants is critical in order to motivate farmers, environmental organizations, wholesalers and retailers to accept and support the standards. Shared ownership is also key to creating a credible certification scheme that is trusted by seafood buyers.

The decision making structure used by the Dialogues promotes this ownership and commitment. Most of the Dia-

[continued on page 2](#)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- » CBI assists **integrated mission planning**. [Page 4](#)
- » **Improving process efficiency** in Delaware. [Page 5](#)
- » **New, upcoming, and ongoing** at CBI. [Page 6](#)
- » **Why bother** with consensus building? [Page 7](#)
- » **CBI welcomes** new staff to the D.C. office. [Page 8](#)

logues are governed by a steering committee that includes a representation of key stakeholders. The steering committees approve the process by which the Dialogue will develop standards, and have a final say in what they look like. Many steering committees have weekly conference calls and come together periodically for multi-day sessions to develop indicators and standards based on input from a broader set of constituents and public meetings.

CBI's role as an impartial facilitator helps to create the space for greater ownership among stakeholders. WWF asked for CBI's help so that WWF staff could clarify and simplify their own involvement in the dialogues. Initially, WWF was coordinating, facilitating and acting as a stakeholder interested in specific outcomes. Now, WWF focuses on coordination and on active participation as a stakeholder, while CBI takes responsibility for impartially facilitating the dialogues. CBI's facilitation has helped ensure the process meets the needs of all participants, while freeing up WWF to concentrate on coordinating and promoting its conservation goals.

II. Applying a negotiation framework

Standard-setting does not magically happen by bringing people together in a series of meetings. It is a negotiation between key stakeholders who have different world views and different interests. Using a negotiation framework that respects this dynamic has proven fundamental in moving the process forward.



Seafood production in Greece. © Konstantin Karchevskiy | Dreamstime.com

The Mutual Gains Approach to negotiation has guided CBI's support of the Dialogues. The approach assumes that people show up at a negotiating table with different interests and perspectives. The goal of the negotiation isn't to persuade everyone to think the same way, but rather to find creative solutions that help each party meet their goals and interests. This requires dialogue and a structured process to help people develop ideas, weigh options, make decisions that are perceived as fair and anticipate implementation challenges.

In a science-based process such as the Aquaculture Dialogues, a common tendency is to outsource tough decisions to technical working groups or scientists. CBI is helping the Dialogue participants to use an alternative approach: Joint Fact Finding (JFF). This approach does not assume that technical analysis can substitute for negotiation: Instead, JFF helps the groups first come to agreement on the technical questions that need to be answered to produce

CBI Reports

Volume XII • Issue 2 • Winter 2009

The Consensus Building Institute (CBI) is a not-for-profit organization created by leading practitioners and theory builders in the fields of negotiation and dispute resolution. CBI works with leaders, advocates, experts, and communities to promote effective negotiations, build consensus, and resolve conflicts.

Managing Directors
David Fairman & Patrick Field

Editor
Andrew Maxfield

Licensing Inquiries
amaxfield@cbuilding.org

Consensus Building Institute
238 Main Street, Suite 400
Cambridge, MA 02142
Tel: 617.492.1414 • Fax: 617.492.1919
Email: cbi@cbuilding.org
www.cbuilding.org

Copyright © 2009. All rights reserved.



credible information for the group to work with, and on the methods and experts who will do the technical analysis on behalf of the group (see *Consensus Building Handbook*, chapter 9). Rather than asking technical experts to answer the tough policy (and often value-laden) questions and trade-offs inherent in a standard-setting process—such as the use and impact of GMOs in seafood—JFF asks the experts to answer questions that stakeholders agree can be addressed through a technical analysis, and then brings the results back to the stakeholders, who must decide how to use the information in light of their interests. CBI works with the Dialogue steering committees to address these decisions head-on by surfacing stakeholders’ underlying values and beliefs and connecting them with best available science.

III. Reaching out early and often

With 2,000 people participating, the WWF Aquaculture Dialogue process is the largest endeavor ever aimed at creating global standards for the aquaculture industry. The level of participation reflects the attention paid to outreach strategies in the Dialogues, and the importance of engaging key individuals and organizations when developing a global, voluntary standard.

Outreach ranges from an active Web and media presence to meetings with small-scale pangasius farmers in rural Vietnam, Thailand, and India. The objective is to ensure the process is firmly linked to those people and organizations that can help create a more informed standard, champion the process, or stand in its way. Among these stakeholders, seafood buyers—including supermarket chains and food service distributors—represent a key outreach target, as they play a leadership role in determining consumer choices. The Dialogues are focused on the three geographic regions that have the highest per capita consumption of seafood on a country-by-country basis: Asia, North America, and Europe. Several major buyers, such as Sysco and Whole Foods have participated in the Dialogue process.

IV. Documenting clearly

The Aquaculture Dialogues are inherently complicated, given their geographic scope, technical focus, and ambition. In addition, stakeholders enter the process at different stages and with different levels of expertise. This necessitates extremely clear process documentation to keep all parties up to speed, and to make the process accessible to newcomers.

Each Dialogue developed a process document that describes how participants make decisions and develop the standards. Meeting outcomes are captured in accessible summaries that include the rationale for decisions made. Documents are available online in multiple languages. During public comment periods, all feedback has been published on the Dialogue website, along with responses to the feedback and explanations of how and why the draft standards documents were revised to address the feedback.

V. Balancing ownership with alignment

The Aquaculture Dialogues have worked hard to build ownership among participants and, in particular, ownership by the steering committee for each species. The challenge created by this ownership goal is that WWF and some other global stakeholders want consistency across the standards for different species. For example, some stakeholders would like consistency across all the standards on issues such as the sustainable sourcing of feed products, or the ecosystem impacts of exotic species.

As convener of the Dialogues, WWF is promoting information sharing across the Dialogues to create opportunities for cross-fertilization. Some issues warrant a more intensive effort to build alignment to ensure the standards as a package make

sense and aren’t viewed as arbitrary. WWF and CBI have developed a process to bring together “ambassadors” from each of the steering committees. We are facilitating dialogue among the ambassadors to maximize information sharing on critical cross cutting issues and find areas of alignment where deemed necessary by stakeholders themselves.

Conclusion: The power of dialogue

Dialogue participants are volunteering their time in this process to create a more sustainable future for aquaculture. While a great deal of hard work remains before the standards are finalized and begin functioning as a farm-based certification mechanism, the Dialogues are already changing the way some participants view each other and the challenges ahead. ★

Merrick Hoben is the Director CBI’s Washington D.C. office. **David Plumb**, who is based in CBI’s Cambridge office, is a senior associate.

CBI’s role as an impartial facilitator helps to create the space for greater ownership among stakeholders.

Helping the United Nations Integrate Peacebuilding, Humanitarian, and Development Work in Post-Conflict Countries

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a fragile central government seeks to consolidate peace and begin recovery, while still facing serious armed conflict in several eastern provinces.

For the government and people of the DRC, the United Nations system is a critical partner as well as an independent actor in peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and recovery. Its personnel and offices—peacekeepers, high-ranking diplomats, political officers, emergency relief and civilian protection agencies, human rights monitors and advocates, and, development organizations for health, education, children, gender, governance and livelihoods—form an extraordinarily complex structure of strategies, programs, initiatives and quick-response activities.

Within the UN system, creating and maintaining a shared strategic vision of the UN's role in the DRC is a major challenge. In August, CBI Managing Director David Fairman helped plan and facilitate a senior management workshop to begin developing that shared vision and strategy—a process called “integrated mission planning.”

The workshop was the first ever to bring together all of the most senior UN officials in DRC, representing the entire UN system, for a strategic planning exercise. It was also the latest engagement in CBI's growing portfolio of capacity building and facilitation support for UN strategic planning around the world.

Read more about the UN's global integration challenges, CBI's capacity building work with UN strategic planners, and CBI's facilitation of national workshops in the full version of this article at www.cbibuilding.org.

Reflections and Lessons on External Capacity Building and Facilitation of Integrated Mission Planning

The context for UN integrated missions is among the most complex CBI has ever encountered. The UN stakeholders represent an enormously diverse set of mandates, capacities and perspectives: the UN mission must function as an inde-

pendent actor with respect to a transitional national government while being deeply engaged with it; the UN development agencies must work in partnership with that government; and the UN's humanitarian agencies must maintain a nearly complete separation of their work from government in order to assert the primacy of human rights and protection of civilians in a neutral “humanitarian space.”

Given this diversity, it is not surprising that there are sometimes divergent views within the UN system about the intentions and capacities of national actors, the most appropriate strategies or approaches for engaging those actors, and the roles and responsibilities of different UN actors for carrying out those strategies.

For capacity building, the strongest demand from strategic planners has not been for technical skills in analysis or programming. It has been for skills in process design, facilitation, coordination, negotiation, and consensus building. CBI has been able to combine our expertise in building those skills with our direct exposure to the strategic planners' field situations.

In our capacity building work, we have been both peers and resource people, and both roles have been very valuable in developing and delivering capacity building workshops. However, our direct exposure is a very small fraction of the insight that a group of strategic planners can bring jointly to their conversation. In design and facilitation, we have been



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons. Reprinted under GNU Free Documentation License.

committed to making sure that the planners can learn from each other as well as from us.

As designers and facilitators of strategic planning exercises, our challenge has been fourfold: to ensure clarity about the goals of the exercise itself; clarity about the most important questions that the UN needs to address in the exercise in order to create a shared vision and strategy; clarity about roles, responsibilities and decision rules within the exercise; and productive conversation about difficult substantive and organizational issues.

Our involvement with UN integrated mission planning has reinforced our sense that even on very sensitive issues with very high stakes, external capacity building on process design, facilitation and negotiation skills, and external facilitation of challenging conversations, can help advance impor-

tant organizational and international goals.

Above all, we have been grateful for the opportunity to play a modest role in the UN's ongoing, often extraordinary efforts to save lives, make peace and rebuild countries in the aftermath of war.



UN peacekeepers assisting displaced people in the DRC

To read the full version of this article, visit www.cbuilt.org. For more information on CBI's capacity building and facilitation support for the UN and other international development actors, please contact CBI Managing Director David Fairman. ★

CASE STUDY

One Thousand Days in Delaware

One thousand days. This is the average application and processing time for a new development project in New Castle County (NCC), Delaware. The multi-year process has often caused friction among developers, state planning agencies, and the NCC Department of Land Use. In these straitened economic times, these same parties acknowledged a mutual interest in attracting new business opportunities and development projects to the County. All parties also valued Delaware's quality of life and neighborhoods. Therefore, in the spring of 2009, New Castle County Executive, and several private parties engaged the Delaware Public Policy Institute (DPPI) and Consensus Building Institute (CBI) to convene a policy dialogue on NCC's application and permitting process for land use and development.

The CBI Approach

CBI worked with DPPI to arrange a series of focus groups and individual interviews with affected stakeholders to assess outstanding issues, concerns, and ideas. Based on these



<http://lib.utexas.edu/maps/delaware.html>

conversations, CBI was able to determine that there were enough actionable issues and interested stakeholders to merit further collaboration, and thus recommended proceeding with a Policy Dialogue.

The Policy Dialogue was well attended by stakeholders representing many different interests, including the county agency, the state transportation agency, the state environmental agency, the governor's office, and several private developers and community organizations.

continued on page 6

During the dialogue, participants were able to discuss the issues in a structured setting as CBI facilitator Patrick Field led the group in understanding the ground rules, identifying individual and mutual interests, naming and prioritizing challenges, and posing possible solutions to those challenges. As the dialogue progressed, several issues emerged as significant barriers to efficiency in the permitting process:

1. Agency response times were uncertain and could be improved in some cases;
2. Review processes of local and state agencies could be better coordinated;
3. Multiple agency submissions and complexity of stormwater design caused delays in the stormwater review process; and
4. Insufficient staffing, excess work load, and mixed-quality consulting engineering reports slowed review times.

The Results

The group developed a list of actionable solutions to the stated challenges. Participants were able to agree in whole or in part on the need for certain improvements to the process including (but not limited to):

1. Creation of an Ombudsperson role whose only charge would be to take care of issues arising from the permitting process;
2. Solicitation of feedback from the public and state agencies at an earlier stage, before the developer has gone too far in the planning process to change course; and
3. Creation of triannual agency meetings in which state and local agency directors convene to discuss issues and bottlenecks in the permitting process.

Representatives from the state and local agencies expressed their commitment to taking the recommendations into consideration. The County and the state's transportation agency have already begun instituting a set of changes including an improved land use review process, increased use of online collaboration and process management tools (like SharePoint), and internal reorganization to better align reviews.

Participants were encouraged by their progress and their ability to find common ground on key issues. Ideally, these initial collaborative steps will lead to a more efficient permitting process in the future. ★

This case was written by **Seyi Olubadewo**.
See www.cbuilding.org for more cases.



PROJECT

CBI is working with residents, local businesses, non-profit organizations and municipal and state agencies in three Rhode Island communities on a holistic approach to community planning and development. Initiated by Rhode Island Housing, **KeepSpace** is a new approach to planning for and directing investment that supports communities where neighbors meet, people work, and children play. As part of a public engagement team lead by the Horsley Witten Group and with Dodson Associates, CBI is helping to design and implement a public engagement approach.



UPDATES

CBI is working closely with the leadership and Board of the **Chesapeake Bay Trust** as they embark on a new strategic plan for the next five years. Since its inception, CBT has supported school programs, restoration projects, and capacity building for promoting the long-term stewardship of the Bay. Despite almost twenty years of effort across governments, foundations, and the private sector, the Bay is still threatened with phosphorus pollution, habitat loss, and numerous other challenges. With CBI's assistance, CBT intends to produce a new Strategic Plan by early 2010.



After facing heated community dissatisfaction with initial drafts of a master plan, the **Plymouth Municipal Airport** (Plymouth, MA) has committed to developing an inclusive process to seek a consensus on the contentious issues. CBI was retained to assist in designing and facilitating a stakeholder process. Based on CBI's recommendations, the Airport Commission has voted to convene an Advisory Group and is currently working to finalize the scope and membership of the Group, and plans to begin meetings soon.

» View more project updates and case studies at www.cbuilding.org.

Why Bother with Consensus Building?

If you listen to any cable or radio news show for an hour, chances are that someone will ask whether there is *consensus* in Washington, Wall Street, or Main Street. As defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary, consensus means 1) unanimous or general agreement; 2) group solidarity of sentiment or thought. These days such solidarity can be hard to come by.



By Hal Movius

When I ask audiences what *consensus building* means, the most common response is that it involves discussion or debate that leads to some minimal agreement or watered-down compromise. But that's a far cry from the creative and collaborative efforts and outcomes that I see in our work. Practiced well, consensus building involves:

1. Bringing additional players into the process who can add new or different information and perspectives;
2. Creating ground rules for conversation that make it possible for parties to understand one another's interests;
3. Identifying areas in which technical data are conflicting, ambiguous, or subject to different interpretation;
4. Supporting "joint fact finding" to help move the deliberations beyond positional claims and counterclaims and to establish shared assumptions or baselines around past findings and current or future risk and uncertainty;
5. Fostering the invention of new ideas and options that meet the parties' interests more substantially than the options that had previously existed.

It's this last aspect that most people miss. Often, the new ideas and options that emerge through consensus building are the ones to increase the legitimacy of solutions, making widespread endorsement and implementation more likely.

When I describe what CBI practitioners are up to—conflict assessments and negotiation audits; consensus building; tailored training and coaching; neutral assistance in complex negotiations—audiences are surprised at the range of problems we tackle using a common theory, the Mutual Gains Approach. But as Kurt Lewin once remarked, there is nothing

so practical as a good theory. When parties collaborate to invent options that address their goals and concerns, they create agreements that are more efficient, more valuable, and more sustainable than what they could have created in isolation or in positional haggling. It doesn't matter whether they are negotiating a billion dollar commercial venture, an international trade agreement, an environmental policy initiative, or the design of a local public school.

The business world, where I practice, lags behind other sectors in making use of consensus building techniques. Too often leaders ask for input, write notes on flipcharts, foster debate—and then make a decision behind closed doors without clear criteria.

The most common objection (and misconception) that I hear is that consensus building "takes too long." This was the opinion of a CEO with whom I spoke recently. In his mind, consensus required ceding control to a large group that would bat around a few options until everyone assented to one of them, perhaps in a modified form. Summoning a bit of courage, I asked, "How long will it take if you try to implement a bad idea?" He looked irritated but then laughed, saying, "I get the point." I suggested that an outside facilitator could draw out hidden interests and concerns, focus discussions, identify missing information, help generate new ideas, pinpoint sources of disagreement, and give both creativity and ownership to the group—without a lot of extra time.

Consensus building is not about badgering parties into compromise. Instead, it is about creating a collaborative workspace where new ideas can lead to better agreements. Elsewhere in this issue of CBI Reports, and at our website you will find examples of the kind of work we're doing around the world. We hope you'll spread the word: consensus building can help leaders and organizations to create better solutions to complex, pressing problems. ★

Hal Movius is Principal and Director of
CBI's Business Practice.

CBI Welcomes Seyi & Rachel to the D.C. Office



Recently, **Oluseyi Olubadewo** joined the CBI team as a Senior Fellow in the Washington, D.C. office. She recently graduated from the Law-Psychology program at Drexel University and Villanova Law School, earning her law degree and a doctorate in psychology. While in school, her research interests included mental health problems in the juvenile justice system, comprehension of legal rights by juvenile delinquents, critical race theory, and constitutional law. Ms. Olubadewo has had extensive work experiences within the non-profit sector including the international development field, pro bono legal services, and community mental health services. Most recently, Ms. Olubadewo served as a consultant in the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group where her primary responsibilities included analyzing ongoing international development projects in order to identify key points and important trends among the data. In her role as senior fellow, Ms. Olubadewo's work will be primarily focused within the international practice area.

Rachel Milner Gillers recently joined CBI as a Senior Associate. Her recent projects include assisting with multi-stakeholder process design for the development of global water stewardship standards, and building capacity for an international health organization to negotiate with technical partners and sponsoring organizations. She has trained attorneys, educators, and executives from around the world at the Harvard Negotiation Initiative (HNI) and has created and delivered mediation skills workshops for students, community volunteers, and religious leaders. In partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), she designed a mediation training program to help improve access to justice in rural Cambodia. In the private sector, she has developed negotiation and conflict management tools for industries such as financial services, technology, and reinsurance. While working at the U.S. Embassy in Tunisia, she contributed to public diplomacy efforts at the regional office of the U.S. Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative.





Better negotiations.
BETTER DECISION MAKING.
Better results.

[Contact Us](#) | [FAQ](#)

[Explore CBI](#) | [Government](#) | [International](#) | [Business](#) | [NGOs](#) | [Research](#) | [Case Studies](#)

CBI Case Studies

In an effort to promote best practices and continuous learning in relevant fields, CBI documents its wide variety of project work in the form of detailed case studies. These project case studies are made available to the public to help interested parties understand the kinds of conflicts, negotiations, opportunities, and obstacles that can be addressed effectively through consensus-based or collaborative interventions.

CBI often produces private case studies and assessment reports for organizations that wish to learn from their current practices. For more information about commissioning a case study or assessment report, read about CBI's research and evaluation services or [contact us](#).

| Sector | Service | Year | Topic |
|----------|----------|------|----------|
| - None - | - None - | | - None - |



Resolving Conflicts between the Israeli Government and Bedouin Stakeholders in Kseife and Um Batin
Case Study | Posted on: December, 2006 | Author: David Kovick
In Israel, conflicts between Bedouin communities and the Israeli government have grown increasingly intense in recent years. At stake in the strategically and symbolically important southern Negev Desert region are fundamental questions of both security and stability for the State of Israel and development, justice, and human rights for

News & Views

[Exploring New Models for a National Forest: CBI Helps Lead Focus Groups](#)
Nov 19, 2009

[CBI Assists in Stakeholder Assessment of Connecticut River Watershed](#)
Nov 10, 2009

[CBI Facilitates Air Force Cleanup of Massachusetts Military Reservation](#)
Oct 28, 2009

[Improving Negotiations in the Dominican Republic](#)
Oct 27, 2009

[CBI Helps CFOs and Other Senior Executives Support Effective Negotiations](#)
Oct 21, 2009

[more](#)

Looking for more examples of consensus building?

Visit us online at www.cbuilding.org to read a variety of case studies that illuminate our work across sectors.