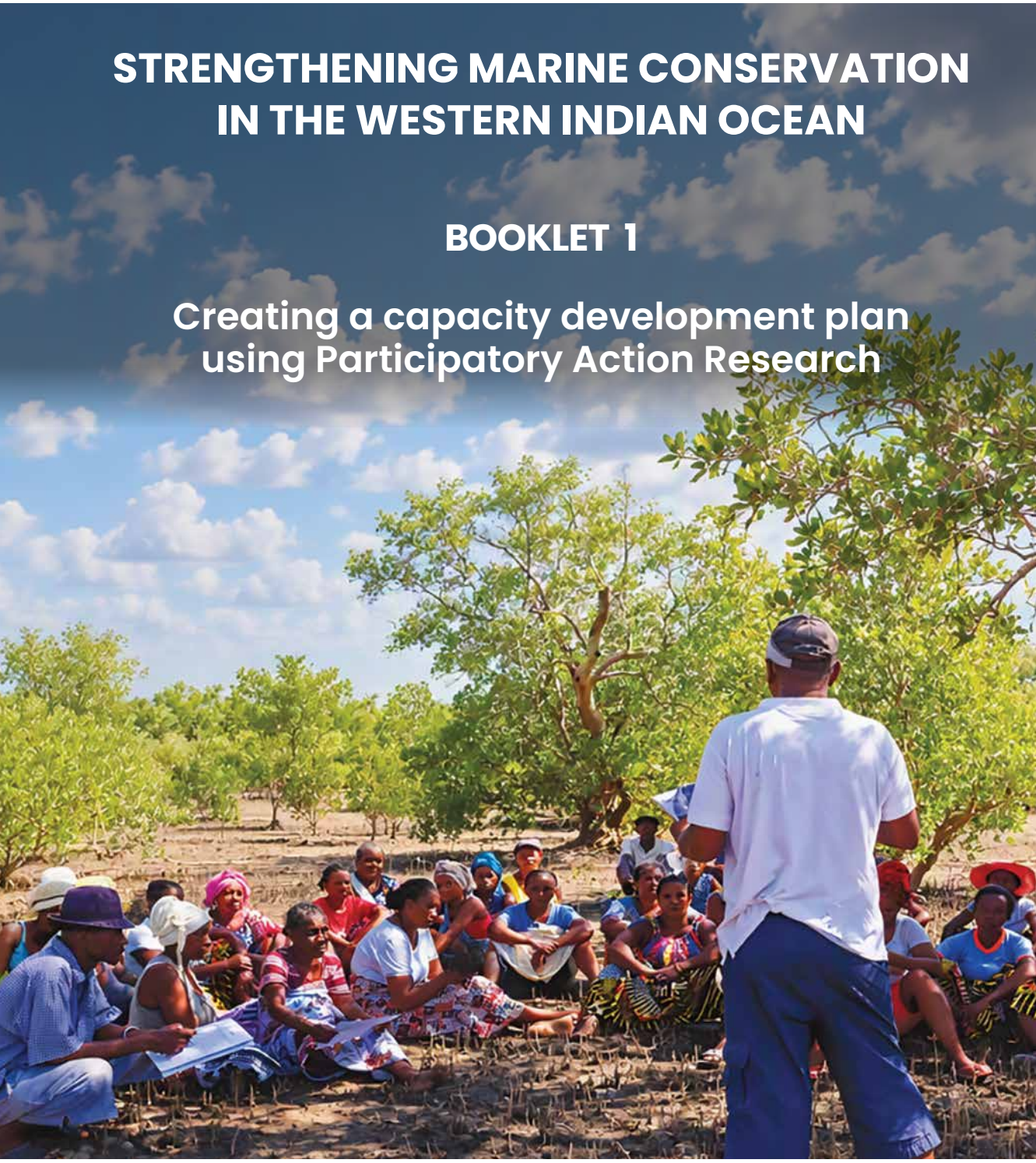
ReSea

# STRENGTHENING MARINE CONSERVATION IN THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN

## BOOKLET 1

## Creating a capacity development plan using Participatory Action Research



mission inclusion | IUCN GBW Great Blue Wall | WIOMSA | MACQUARIE University SYDNEY·AUSTRALIA | In partnership with Canada

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## Creating a capacity development plan using Participatory Action Research

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**STRENGTHENING MARINE CONSERVATION IN THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN**

**Booklet 1:** ***Creating a capacity development plan using Participatory Action Research***

**About this series:**

***Strengthening marine conservation in the Western Indian Ocean*** is a two-booklet series developed to support inclusive capacity development for the establishment, management and governance of marine protected areas (MPAs) and locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) across the Western Indian Ocean. The series comprises:

**Booklet 1:** Creating a capacity development plan using Participatory Action Research

**Booklet 2:** A Compendium of MPA and LMMA Training Resources

**Version:** 1.0 | October 2026

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Contributions included providing technical input and feedback, sharing information on training resources, drafting resource summaries, and identifying relevant tools.

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# About this series

Strengthening marine conservation in the Western Indian Ocean is a two-booklet series that supports inclusive capacity development for the establishment, management and governance of marine protected areas (MPAs) and locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) across the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). It offers a participatory process for identifying community-specific needs and co-creating training grounded in local realities, so that learning stays responsive as contexts and challenges change.

## Who it is for

Whether you are a conservation professional, a community leader, or someone keen to strengthen your own knowledge and skills, you play an important role in building capacity for marine conservation. The series is designed for:

- Facilitators and trainers – to guide participatory training design and delivery, and help communities and MPA/LMMA teams put their capacity plans into action
- Community leaders, MPA managers and local mentors – to plan and run training sessions
- Government, NGO, civil society, community-based organisation and academic staff – to support governance, learning and capacity development
- Self-learners – to use as a reference for independent study and practice

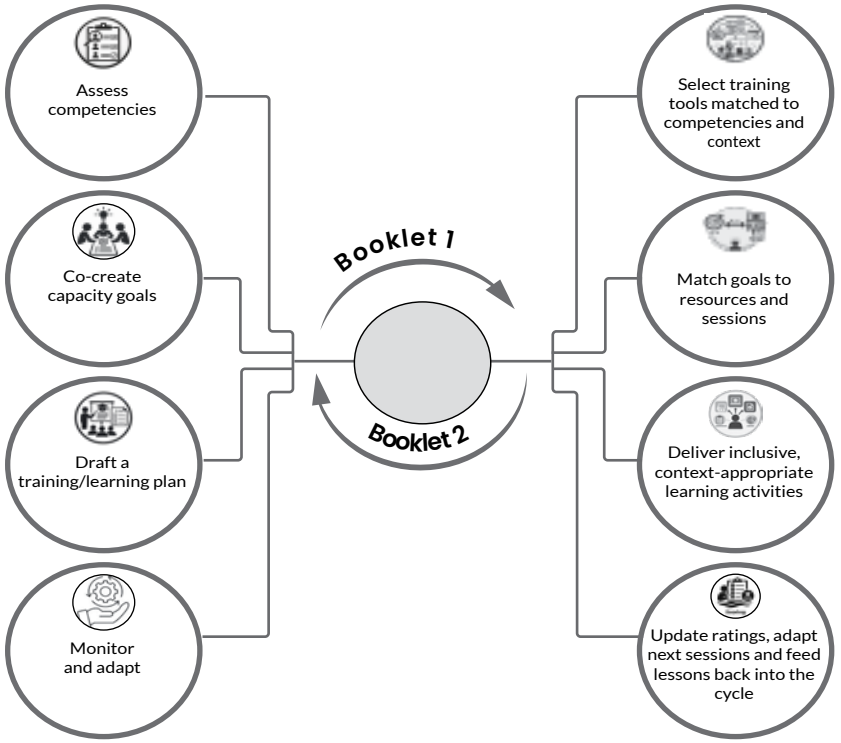
## What it helps you do

- Assess competencies and agree what to strengthen, and why
- Turn the results into capacity goals and a practical capacity development plan
- Find training resources that match specific competencies and learning needs
- Plan and deliver training that is accessible, realistic and responsive to your group's preferences
- Reflect on what worked and adapt the plan as needs change

You don't need to be an expert facilitator. You just need to listen, adapt, and use the tools here to support shared learning.

# How the two booklets work together

**Booklet 1** helps you identify what to strengthen and why**. Booklet 2** shows how to act on those priorities. It picks up in Phase 2 of the Look–Think–Act cycle, helping you think through the most suitable actions and training, and act by choosing and delivering the right learning activities. Used together, the two booklets form a continuous learning loop that links assessment, planning, delivery and reflection.




How the two booklets work together. Booklet 1 takes you from assessing competencies to a capacity development plan; Booklet 2 helps you select, deliver and review the training.

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# Acronyms and abbreviations

BMU ..... Beach Management Unit

CA ..... Competency Area

CORDIO ..... Coastal Oceans Research and Development in the Indian Ocean

ESARO ..... Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (IUCN)

FPIC ..... Free, Prior and Informed Consent

GPS ..... Global Positioning System

IFC ..... International Finance Corporation

IMET ..... Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool

IUCN ..... International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

LMMA ..... Locally Managed Marine Area

M&E ..... Monitoring and Evaluation

MIHARI ..... Short for MIHARI Network, the network of locally managed marine area (LMMA) Communities in Madagascar

MoU ..... Memorandum of Understanding

MPA ..... Marine Protected Area

NGO ..... Non-Governmental Organisation

PAR ..... Participatory Action Research

ReSea ..... Regenerative Seascapes for People, Climate and Nature

SOP ..... Standard Operating Procedure

TNC ..... The Nature Conservancy

UNDRIP ..... United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

WIO ..... Western Indian Ocean

WIOMPAN ..... Western Indian Ocean Marine Protected Areas Network

WIOMSA ..... Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association

WWF ..... World Wide Fund for Nature



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# Overview and guiding principles

## Introduction

This capacity development guidebook and training compendium is designed to support inclusive marine conservation in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) by helping facilitators and trainers, whether from government, NGOs, or communities, strengthen the capacity of stakeholders involved in Marine Protected Area (MPA) and Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) governance.

This series is developed as part of the Regenerative Seascapes for People, Climate and Nature (ReSea) Program, led by IUCN in partnership with Mission Inclusion, and other organisations in the WIO region. ReSea seeks to strengthen biodiversity conservation, enhance climate and socioeconomic resilience of coastal communities, and advance gender-responsive approaches to marine governance. By contributing to these goals, this guidebook and training compendium aim to build the knowledge, skills, and networks needed for effective and inclusive MPA and LMMA capacity development across the region.

While LMMAs are a core focus of the ReSea Program, this guide also addresses MPAs, recognising that both play vital and complementary roles in conservation. In the WIO, MPAs are generally government-managed with trained managers and rangers that protect larger areas, but often lack strong community engagement. On the other hand, LMMAs are community-led and often operate with little to no external support. Each approach faces unique challenges, yet both need practical guidance and skills to plan, establish, and manage their areas effectively. This manual and its companion compendium are therefore designed to meet the needs of both MPA and LMMA practitioners.

The compendium draws on a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach (Whyte, 1991) and the LMMA Competency Framework (WIOMSA, 2026) to identify capacity development needs, co-create learning plans, and support adaptive, community-informed implementation. Using these tools together enables dynamic training design that evolves with local realities, strengthens ownership, and builds governance capacity across different actors.

This resource is structured into two complementary booklets:

**Booklet 1: Creating a capacity development plan using Participatory Action Research** (this booklet)

- Offers step-by-step guidance for conducting a participatory assessment using the LMMA Competency Framework, and translating results into a capacity development plan.

**Booklet 2: A Compendium of MPA and LMMA Training Resources**

- Builds on the plans developed using Booklet 1 by providing practical and context-sensitive training resources and customisable learning tools to implement the capacity development plans created using Booklet 1.

Together, the booklets guide you from assessment and planning to action, ensuring training efforts are rooted in both local knowledge and sound governance practice.



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# Using PAR to guide capacity needs assessment, design and delivery

Think of PAR as more than just a method. It's a mindset that supports adaptive learning. By embedding regular reflection into your practice, you can adjust training content and delivery to match community needs. As a practitioner, it helps you decide which tools to use from the compendium (Booklet 2), and when to seek support from others.

## Key benefits of PAR

**Community ownership**

Communities help plan, assess, and design, leading to stronger local leadership.

**Adaptive learning**

Regular reflection keeps training relevant as needs and contexts change.

**Legitimacy and trust**

Inclusive processes build trust across communities, professionals, and authorities.

**Blending knowledge systems**

Brings together local knowledge and science for more holistic strategies.

**Equity and inclusion**

Ensures women, youth, and marginalised groups can shape outcomes.

**Action learning**

Tools like the Look–Think–Act cycle support shared reflection and co-created solutions.



# PAR principles for practitioners

Effective community-led training and planning rely on core principles that make participation meaningful, inclusive, and practical. Whether you are facilitating a session, supporting others or learning on your own, these principles can help guide your approach.

By following these principles, PAR becomes a practical and empowering tool for MPA and LMMA capacity development.



### PROMOTE INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION

Create space for all voices, including women, youth, fishers, Indigenous leaders, and minority groups. Use facilitation techniques that reduce barriers such as literacy, mobility, or traditional power dynamics, and encourage open and respectful dialogue.



### VALUE DIVERSE KNOWLEDGE

Balance local and scientific knowledge by encouraging mutual learning. Tools like participatory mapping, storytelling, and community monitoring can help integrate traditional insights with technical expertise.



### FACILITATE FOR LEARNING

Think of yourself as a guide, not a lecturer. Use dialogue, active listening, and group activities to spark reflection and shared problem-solving. Support communities to explore their own solutions and take ownership of outcomes.



### ANCHOR LEARNING IN REAL LIFE AND LOCAL PRIORITIES

Design activities that connect directly to local realities. Role-plays, scenario planning, and site visits make new knowledge practical and immediately relevant to decision-making.



### ADAPT METHODS TO BE FLEXIBLE AND ACCESSIBLE

Every group is different, so adapt your methods accordingly. Use flexible approaches – like drawings, videos or role-play – to make learning accessible across literacy levels, abilities, and cultural backgrounds.



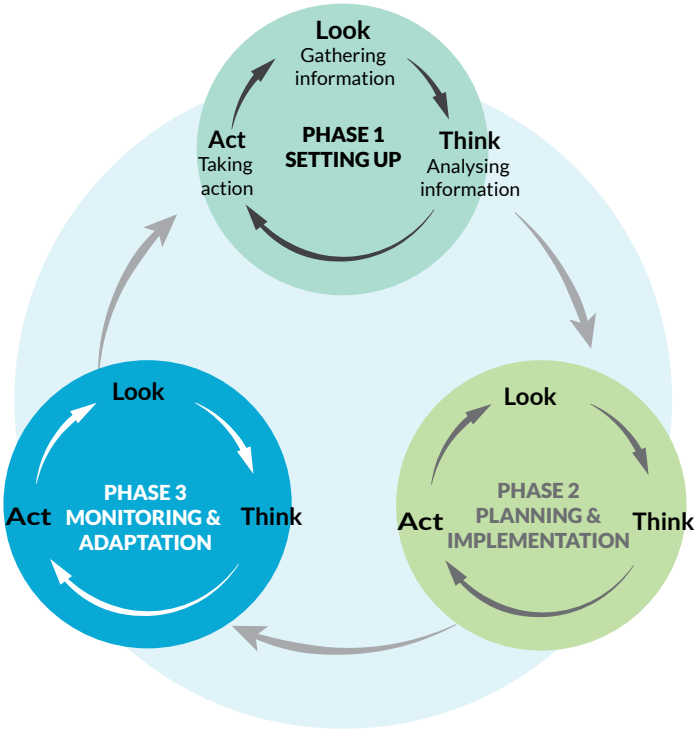

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# How to facilitate the capacity development process using this guide

Grounded in the PAR principles, this guide walks you through the full process – from identifying capacity development needs to implementing and adapting a responsive plan. Whether leading as a facilitator or working as part of a local team, the steps will help ensure an inclusive and collaborative approach to strengthening MPA and LMMA governance.

The **Look–Think–Act cycle** is a simple yet powerful framework for participatory planning, facilitation, and evaluation (Stringer, 2014). It helps groups reflect, make decisions, and link learning to action through three steps:

- **Look** – Observe and describe the current situation or context.
- **Think** – Reflect on challenges, opportunities, and underlying causes.
- **Act** – Identify and implement practical actions for improvement.




Look–Think–Act as the backbone of capacity development. *Adapted from Stringer et al. (2010).* Each stage applies a small Look–Think–Act loop, with learning flowing across stages and looping back to the start for continuous, evidence-led adaptation. The linked loops ensure training remains responsive, participatory, and grounded in community realities.

Each cycle feeds into the next, keeping capacity development responsive and grounded in community realities. Originally developed as a research and learning tool, Look–Think–Act also works well for planning and evaluating training. It fosters shared learning, supports inclusive decision-making, and links reflection to tangible outcomes. In this guide, the steps mirror the cycle: begin by looking at your current capacities, thinking through gaps and goals with others, and acting by designing and implementing a locally tailored plan.



# Phase 1: Setting up the process

Before starting the assessment and planning, lay a solid foundation to ensure the process is inclusive and supported by the community.

1. **Recognise capacity development needs** – Talk with community leaders and key stakeholders about the challenges they face in managing their MPA or LMMA.
   ***Prompt:*** What governance, communication, or technical gaps are limiting effectiveness?
   ***Tip:*** Use real examples from recent community meetings or enforcement issues to spark discussion.

2. **Form a team** – Gather a diverse group (e.g., community leaders, youth or women's representatives, NGO staff, or government partners) to guide the process.
   ***Prompt:*** Who has the trust of the community? Who brings useful knowledge or lived experience?
   ***Tip:*** Clarify roles early by asking or electing who wants to be the lead facilitator, note-taker, logistical support, etc.

3. **Orient stakeholders** – Hold a preparatory session to explain the purpose of the assessment, what to expect, and how results will be used.
   ***Prompt:*** How can we make the process accessible and inclusive (e.g., language, venue, facilitation style)?
   ***Tip:*** Use visuals or role-play to explain the steps and tools (including the use of the LMMA Competency Framework).



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# Phase 2: Planning and implementing the process

This is where the participatory cycle begins, following the Look–Think–Act model. These steps involve assessment, planning, implementation, and ongoing learning by carrying out training activities.

1. **Conduct a capacity review** – Use the LMMA Competency Framework with groups and committees to review skills, knowledge, and capacity.

   ***Prompt:*** What are we already doing well? Where do we lack confidence or consistency?



   ***Tip:*** Record both scores and reflections. Run separate sessions for women or youth if needed.

2. **Co-design the capacity development plan** – Turn the findings into a practical plan that outlines priority training areas, roles, timelines, and resource needs.

   ***Prompt:*** What support (training, funding, partnerships) is needed to close the gaps identified? Which trainings should we run first based on the resources available and urgency of needs?



   ***Tip:*** Use the templates provided and include quick wins alongside longer-term actions.

3. **Implement the plan** – Deliver training using resources from the compendium, with available human and financial resources. Ensure women, youth, fishers, and other groups can participate fully. Coordinate with partners as needed to provide support, materials, or co-facilitation.

   ***Prompt:*** Are the training sessions accessible, inclusive and relevant for all the participants? Are the methods interactive and engaging?



   ***Tip:*** Use visuals, group discussions, and hands-on methods to keep sessions practical and grounded. Adjust your approach as needed to fit the groups' literacy levels, language, and cultural norms.



# Phase 3: Monitoring and adaptation

Track progress, reflect on outcomes, and update the plan to keep it responsive.

1. **Collect feedback** – Track the activities delivered, who participated, and what changes are emerging. Use observation, participant feedback, simple checklists, or pre/post assessments.

   ***Prompt:*** What training activities were completed? Who and how many participated? What signs of improvement or challenges are we seeing?

   ***Tip:*** Use visual monitoring tools (e.g., green (yes, I understand) and red (no, I don't understand) fans) or quick participant reflections to keep the process inclusive and low-tech.

2. **Reflect on outcomes** – Review training results to see which competencies improved, and where further support is needed. Discuss what helped or hindered progress.

   ***Prompt:*** Which areas showed improvement? What still needs work? What factors helped or held us back (e.g., training materials, logistics)?

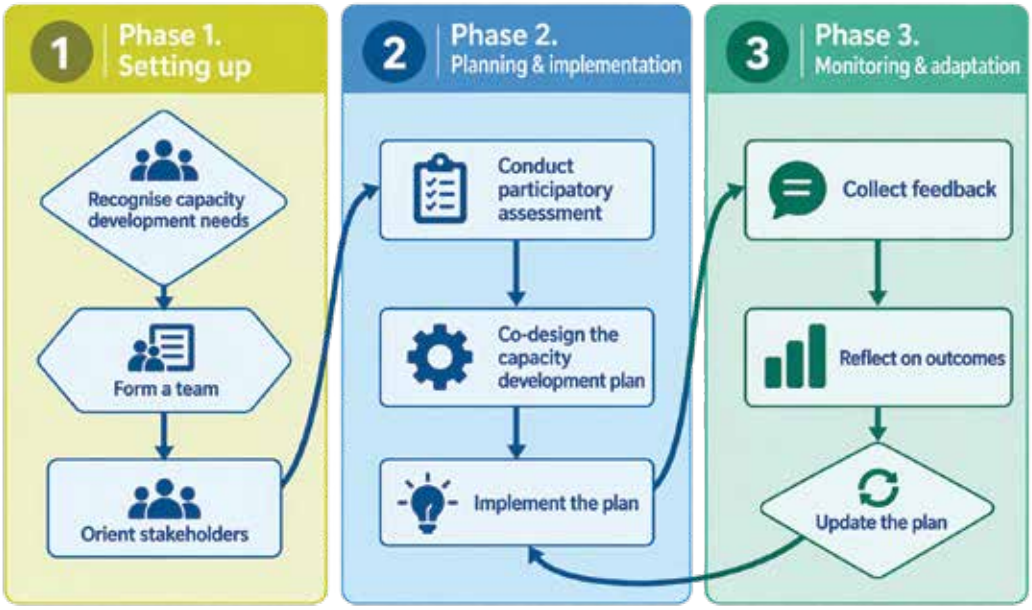
   ***Tip:*** Hold a reflection session soon after the activities. Talk to the team and the community to discuss what worked and didn't work.

3. **Update the plan** – Revise the plan to reflect new priorities or persistent gaps. Decide if a new competency assessment or a broader governance review is needed.

   ***Prompt:*** What adjustments should we make to the activities, timelines or priorities? Do we need to change the materials? Do we need to emphasise certain sections of the training materials more? Do we need to limit the size of the training groups?

   ***Tip:*** Use the revised plan to set new milestones and prepare for the next cycle of learning and implementation.





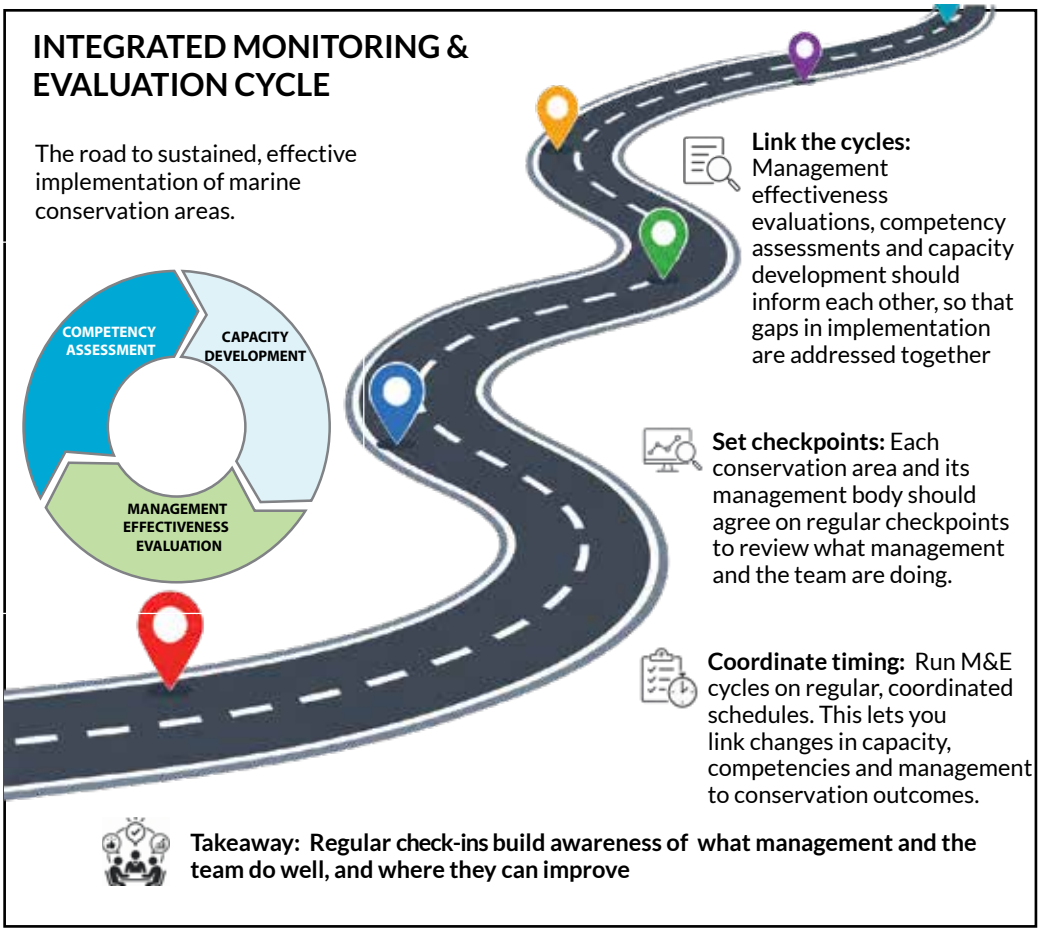

Capacity development as an iterative process. Though presented linearly, the three phases operate as a continuous, **Look–Think–Act** cycle that demands deliberate planning and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Learning and feedback can prompt teams to pause, adapt, or loop back to earlier steps as needed.




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# Keeping the capacity development plan dynamic

Completing one cycle is not the end of the process. A capacity development plan should stay flexible and evolve as skills, roles, and governance structures change. Regularly repeating the MPA/ LMMA competency assessment helps track progress and reveal new gaps. To make the most of resources, align these assessments with scheduled MPA and LMMA management effectiveness reviews, so capacity-building actions and governance priorities are planned together. This integrated, iterative approach strengthens learning, improves resource use, and ensures that capacity-building efforts continue to address both operational and governance priorities.




Integrated management effectiveness to capacity development cycle. Management reviews highlight gaps, competency assessments explain why they occur, and the capacity development plan targets those gaps. Training and on-the-job support build skills, feeding into the next review. Checkpoints along the "road" signal regular, coordinated management effectiveness and competency cycles so learning and priorities are updated together.

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## Monitoring and Evaluation Cycles – The links between governance, management and capacity

Capacity development works best when it is linked to what is actually happening on the ground. Ideally, you will understand the competencies of the team and community members involved in MPA/ LMMA governance and management, because this helps you target learning and support to the right roles and skills. However, if you do not have the time or resources to do a full competency review, you can still identify capacity needs using results from governance or management performance assessments.

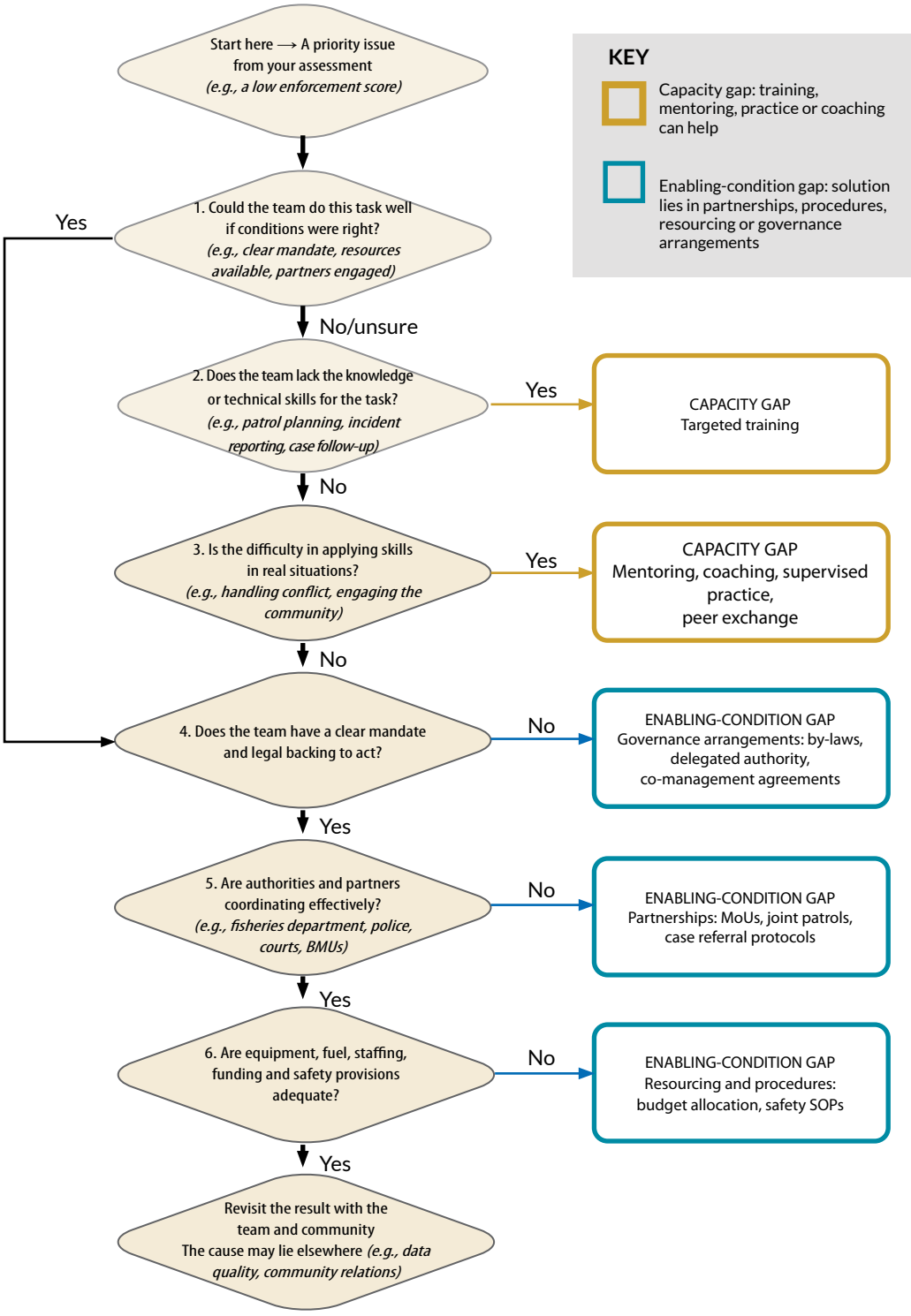
Tools such as IMET (Paolini and Rakotobe, 2023), Elinordata.org (Mahajan et al., 2024), and other governance or management assessment approaches and tools help teams review how well management is functioning and where the main weaknesses and priorities lie. Use these results as a starting point for reflection, not a final judgement. For example, if enforcement scores are low, first ask why: is it a skills gap (e.g., patrol planning, reporting, case follow-up, community engagement), or are there other barriers (e.g., unclear mandates, weak legal backing, limited coordination with authorities, safety risks, or lack of equipment and fuel)? Sometimes the team has the skills, but the problem is an enabling condition outside their direct control.

This reflection helps you separate:

- Capacity gaps (where training, mentoring, practice, or coaching can help), and
- Enabling-condition gaps (where the solution is partnerships, procedures, resourcing, or governance arrangements).

You can then translate the priority issues into clear capacity development goals and actions even without using the LMMA Competency Framework by moving through a simple cycle (see the example flowchart on the next page).

## Is it a capacity gap or an enabling-condition gap?




*Tip: Many issues involve both types of gap. Address them in parallel, then carry them into capacity development planning (Phase 2, Step 2).*

# Participatory assessment using the LMMA Competency Framework

## Overview of the LMMA Competency Framework

The LMMA Competency Framework (WIOMSA, 2026) is a participatory tool that helps LMMA committees and their partners reflect on their current skills, identify strengths and gaps, and plan practical capacity development actions. Originally developed for and by community members forming the MIHARI Network in Madagascar, the framework has been adapted and piloted across the WIO. The framework enables communities to assess their strengths, identify gaps, and prioritise capacity building activities.

The framework is composed of two integrated components:

**1. Competency Standards** – A comprehensive framework of seven core competency areas, further broken down into 40 specific competencies:

- CA1: Governance
- CA2: Planning, management, monitoring and documentation
- CA3: Communication and stakeholder engagement
- CA4: Financial management and accountability
- CA5: Management and monitoring of subsistence activities and community well-being
- CA6: Management of the marine resources
- CA7: Leadership

**2. Assessment Tool** – A practical method to score competencies based on real tasks and evidence, either as self-assessment or with external facilitation. The tool is available in both paper and digital formats, including mobile data collection with Epicollect5. It also has a simple scoring system, facilitation guidance, and dashboards for analysing results.

The competency framework is primarily designed to assess and reflect on LMMA management capacity. This guidebook and the companion training compendium take the next step by providing templates and guidance to transform assessment results into concrete capacity development goals, training plans, and follow-up actions. In this way, the guide complements the framework by linking assessment to implementation.

## How to facilitate a competency review

A participatory competency review is carried out with the LMMA management committee and, if relevant, active sub-groups such as enforcement teams, women's groups, or youth representatives. The process helps groups reflect on their collective strengths and gaps across the seven core competency areas.

If this is your first time using this framework, it is best to involve a trained assessor or auditor to facilitate and guide the process to ensure it is inclusive and well-documented. If your committee has

already used the framework before, you can lead your own self-reflection exercise with minimal external support. In either case, be honest, and back up your scores with real evidence. The self-reflection process involves the following key steps:

**1. Orientation** – Start with a simple explanation of why the competency review is needed, and what the seven competency areas are. Use visual aids and participatory exercises to make it clear, especially in low-literacy settings.

**2. Scoring** – For each competency, discuss as a group:

- Do we have this knowledge or skill?
- How many of our members have the skill (i.e., depth of competence)?
- What evidence do we have to support this (e.g., meeting records, plans, activity reports, community feedback)?

**3. Triangulation** – Where possible, engage external stakeholders (e.g., local government, NGOs, women's associations) to cross-check and validate the findings.

**4. Documentation** – Record both scores and discussion notes. This provides a baseline for monitoring progress over time.

Scoring system: Most assessments use a 1–4 scale (with "0" optional for areas where no competence exists). The system captures both the level of performance and the spread of skills across committee members.

## Roles in the review process

The roles of participants will vary slightly depending on whether the review is facilitated by a trained assessor or conducted internally as part of self-reflection exercises by the LMMA committee.


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- **Community leaders and members –** Act as the main reviewers of their own capacities, and can lead self-reflection exercises. Their local knowledge and lived experience are central to scoring and discussion, which they can also provide to trained assessors in formal reviews.
- **Assessors –** Help guide the process, explain the competencies, and ensure all voices are included, especially those of women, youth, and other marginalised groups. They also manage group dynamics and keep the process fair, and lead the documentation of the process to coincide with scoring using the tool.
- **Co-facilitators –** May include NGO staff or government representatives who provide technical support, help gather evidence, and assist with documentation.

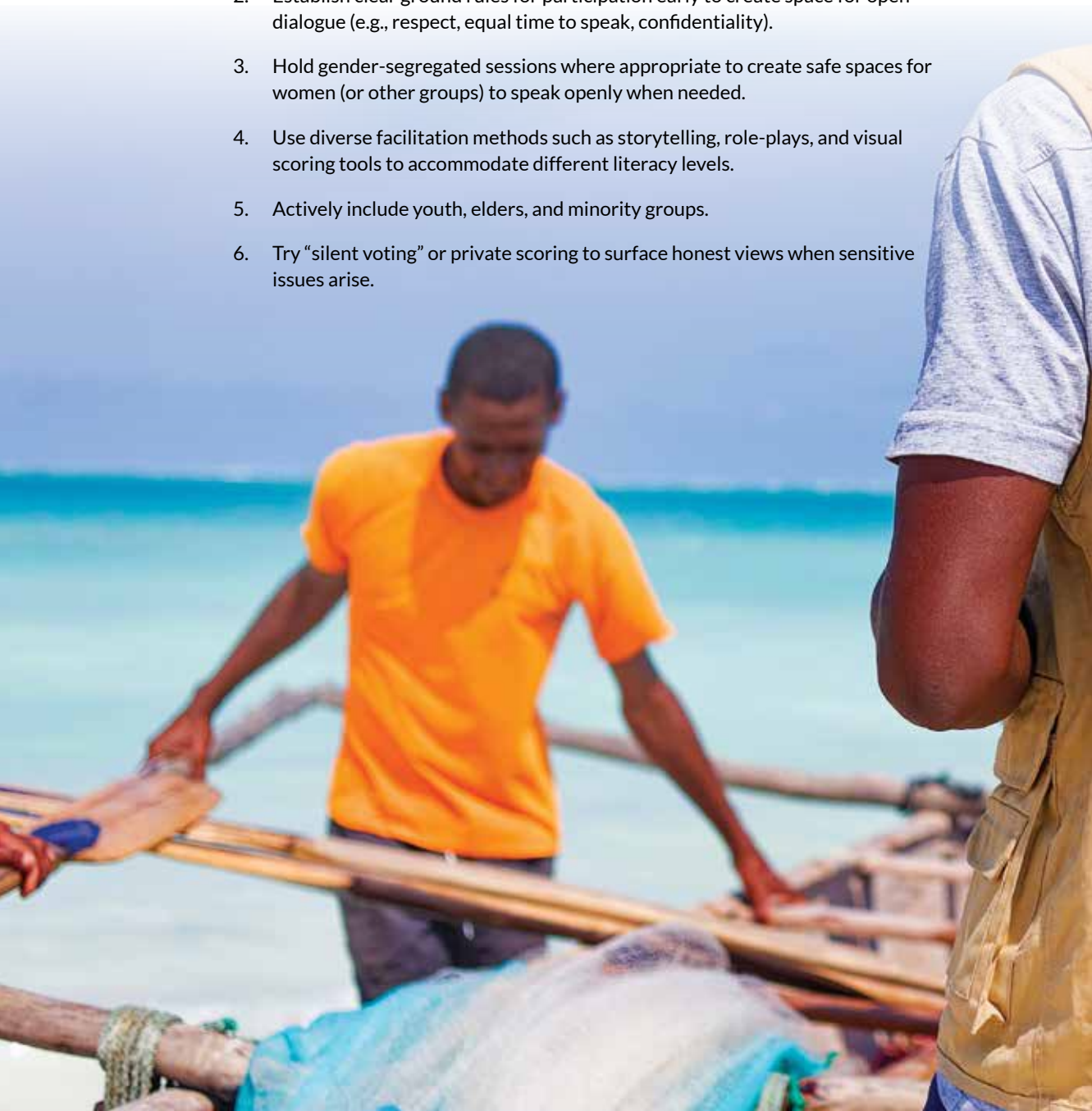
Whatever role you play, remember the goal is shared learning and growth, not passing or failing.

# Tips to manage the focus groups and encourage discussion

Managing focus groups well ensures that the participatory assessment is inclusive, respectful, and productive. Here are some key tips to build trust, minimise dominance of more vocal participants, and promote equitable engagement during the entire process:



1. Keep group sizes manageable. Ideally, there should be no more than eight participants per facilitator. This allows for active participation, easier facilitation and better group dynamics.
2. Establish clear ground rules for participation early to create space for open dialogue (e.g., respect, equal time to speak, confidentiality).
3. Hold gender-segregated sessions where appropriate to create safe spaces for women (or other groups) to speak openly when needed.
4. Use diverse facilitation methods such as storytelling, role-plays, and visual scoring tools to accommodate different literacy levels.
5. Actively include youth, elders, and minority groups.
6. Try "silent voting" or private scoring to surface honest views when sensitive issues arise.



# Running and facilitating focus groups

Facilitating a focus group is more than asking questions. It involves creating a space where participants feel heard, respected, and motivated to share. Good facilitation balances structure with flexibility, ensuring that all voices are included while guiding the conversation towards meaningful insights. Below are key tips to help you manage group dynamics, encourage participation, and ensure that the discussion produces useful input for your capacity assessment and planning process (Kornbluh, 2022; Ayton and Tsindos, 2023).



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When running a focus group:

Begin with a warm introduction, setting clear objectives and creating a safe, respectful space.

Use open-ended questions to invite discussion and reflection.

Follow the **Look–Think–Act cycle** to sequence questions from observation, to reflection, to action planning.

Encourage all participants to share, and use tools like visual aids, storytelling, or voting to include different voices.

Summarise key takeaways together before closing, and record them clearly for inclusion in the capacity assessment results.

Include prompts that are responsive to different sub-groups such as: ***"Have women/youth been included in past training or leadership roles? What helped or hindered their participation?"***



**FACILITATION DO'S AND DON'TS**

**DO**

- Create a safe and respectful space
- Keep groups small and manageable
- Use open-ended questions and prompts
- Encourage all voices, especially quieter ones
- Use varied methods (e.g., visuals, storytelling, silent voting)
- Summarise and validate takeaways with the group

**DON'T**

- Let one or two people dominate the discussion
- Rush through scoring without reflection and checking means of verification
- Overload with jargon or technical terms
- Exclude women, youth or minority voices
- Skip documenting notes and evidence
- Treat the process as a "test" instead of shared learning

# Co-designing a capacity development plan

## Turning review results into action using the Look–Think–Act cycle

Once the LMMA Competency Framework review is completed, it's time to sit together and design a practical, community-driven capacity development plan. This plan turns identified gaps into goals, and goals into real, achievable actions. In this section, we guide you through **how to co-design a plan using the Look–Think–Act cycle**. You don't need to be an expert, just follow each step, use the templates provided in the annexes, and refer to **Booklet 2: A Compendium of MPA and LMMA Training Resources** to choose the right resources for your group.

## Look: Translate assessment results into capacity goals

Start by gathering your group and reviewing the results of the LMMA Competency Framework. Ask yourselves:

- Which competencies had responses that varied widely?
- What are the competencies where we scored the lowest?
- What strengths as a group do we have that we can build on?

Use this moment to listen, discuss, and agree on what the results mean for your community. Encourage participants to reflect on questions like:

- Where are we strong, and where do we need help?
- What are we already doing that we can build on?
- What would success look like in one or two years?

Then work together to write down a few clear capacity goals. These are broad aims your community wants to work towards, things like:

- Improve how we patrol and report illegal activities
- Get more women and youth involved in decision-making
- Learn how to monitor coral or fish populations better

***Tools and templates***: Competency summary graphs; Scores per competence area; and Goal Setting Worksheet

**Proficiency by Competency Area**




The proficiency by competency area bar graphs summarise the scores achieved per competency area to allow for a quick review. *Note: The data presented here is just an example.*

# Think: Link goals to actions and training needs

After identifying your capacity development goals, the next step is to think through what actions and skills are needed to get there. Ask the group:

- What specific things do we need to do to reach our goal?
- What knowledge, skills, or confidence do we need to do these well?
- Who needs to learn these – leaders, fishers, youth, women, or all of us?

Once you've talked through this, open **Booklet 2: A Compendium of MPA and LMMA Training Resources.** This booklet is full of training guides, toolkits, and resources you can choose from. It shows:

- Which trainings are best for different topics or roles
- Whether a resource is suited for workshops, hands-on learning, peer exchange, or storytelling
- What's needed to deliver the training (e.g., facilitators, visuals, time, equipment)

Encourage the group to explore and select some training resources and tools that match your goals and are doable in your context. You don't have to do it all at once. Choose what's most relevant and start there. If the resource for your needs is not available, you can check out the supporting networks and contact list in Booklet 2 to seek help.

***Tools and templates:*** Competency-to-training linkage table; Booklet 2 Guide; Training preferences checklist


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# Act: Drafting your capacity development plan

Now it's time to bring everything together to create a clear and realistic plan. It doesn't have to be perfect. What matters is that it's clear, realistic, and something your group can return to and improve over time. Here's what to include:

1. **Priority competencies by group –** List who needs to learn what. For example:
    - **Leaders –** How to make fair decisions, coordinate activities, and support people
    - **Fishers –** Monitoring, patrol skills, sustainable practices
    - **Women and youth –** Public speaking, community mapping, financial literacy

2. **Timeline and learning milestones –** Plot your training activities on a calendar. Write down when they will happen, how long they will take, and how you will know if progress is being made. Use the milestone tracker to celebrate small wins like:
    - Held our first community meeting run by women
    - Trained 10 youth in mangrove monitoring

3. **Monitoring and adaptive learning –** Keep the plan flexible. Things change, and that's okay. Set regular dates to check in, reflect, and adjust. Use short reflection sessions, storytelling circles, or even WhatsApp groups to hear what's working and what needs to change.

***Tools and templates:*** Capacity development plan template; Training schedule and milestone tracker; Target group learning plan; Resource mapping tool; Monitoring and reflection log



# Sustaining the process: Ethics, ownership and ongoing support

Capacity development in MPAs and LMMAs is never "one and done". It is an ongoing, adaptive and relational process. Sustaining it requires attention not just to skills and tools, but also to ethics, ownership, and continued support.

## Respecting community autonomy: Ethics and informed consent

When using participatory approaches like the LMMA Competency Framework and Look–Think–Act cycles, always uphold ethical standards in community engagement. This means respecting people's agency, privacy, and contributions.

**Facilitators should:**

- Explain the purpose of each activity clearly before starting (e.g., assessments, group discussions, documentation)
- Obtain verbal or written consent where needed (e.g., for photos, interviews, or sharing of assessment results)
- Emphasise voluntary participation and that no one should feel pressured to join
- Ensure women, youth, and marginalised groups have safe spaces to contribute
- Share back findings in accessible formats, and discuss how they will be used, stored and accessed

In some contexts, especially where Indigenous Peoples and/or customary rights to coastal and marine areas apply, you may also need to follow ***Free, Prior and Informed Consent*** (FPIC). FPIC is used when an activity or decision could affect people's rights, access to resources, cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, or local governance arrangements. In simple terms, FPIC means:

- People are free to say yes or no without pressure;
- They are asked before decisions are made and activities start; and
- They are given clear information in a way that makes sense locally, including time to discuss and decide internally.

Good practice is to work through the community's own decision-making structures and to document what was agreed, what concerns were raised, and how these were addressed. FPIC is reflected in international standards such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and safeguard frameworks used widely in conservation and development practice (e.g., IFC Performance Standard 7).

# Revisiting and revising the plan over time

A capacity development plan should be dynamic, not static. As situations evolve, new priorities emerge, and people gain experience, the plan should be updated. This aligns with principles of **adaptive management,** which is foundational to effective MPA or LMMA governance.

To keep plans alive:

- Revisit the plan every 3–6 months with community groups
- Use the Look–Think–Act cycle again to reflect on what's working and what needs to change
- Use participatory tools like story sharing, visual calendars, or scorecards to reflect on learning
- Maintain a record of your progress and start improving your LMMA practices, including evidence records, to prepare for future LMMA Competency reviews

Encourage a learning culture where revising a plan is seen as a strength, not a failure.

***Tools and templates:*** Monitoring and reflection log (see Annexes).

# Preparing for handover and local ownership

From the start, it's important to think about who will lead the capacity development process over time. Transitioning from external facilitation to community-led coordination supports long-term sustainability, and depends on local leadership.

Encourage the group to:

- Identify local champions who can take on training, mentoring, or coordination roles
- Assign responsibilities to local committees (e.g., BMUs, seascape teams)
- Record where training materials, plans, and tools are stored (both paper and digital)
- Create backup strategies in case key people move on to different roles and places

## Identifying options for ongoing support

Communities may need additional support after the first phase of planning and training. This could include technical advice, refresher training, mentoring, or funding to implement their plans.

**Help the group explore:**

- Which agencies, NGOs or programs can we approach for support?
- Are there nearby NGOs, networks, or academic institutions we can partner with?
- Are there grant opportunities or micro-financing schemes we can apply for?
- What kind of support (not just funding!) do we need to sustain learning?

Also encourage peer-to-peer support with other MPA/ LMMA communities through WIOMPAN, LMMA networks (e.g., MIHARI Network), Bahari Learning Network, LMMA Alliance, or national seascape alliances.

***Tool:*** Resource mapping worksheet (see Annex 2)




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# Annexes: Capacity development planning session templates and worksheets

# Annex 1: Capacity development planning session templates

These templates are designed to support each phase of the capacity development planning process. They are intended to be used alongside both booklets and are most effective when facilitated in a participatory assessment with community groups.

Each template corresponds to a key step in planning and implementing capacity-building efforts to strengthen MPA and LMMA governance.

Refer to the guidebook for step-by-step instructions on how to introduce and adapt these tools. Use them flexibly – adapt, add, or simplify as needed to fit your context.

## *1. Capacity development planning session record*

**Fill in this form at the start of your planning session. This helps track who was involved, which site was assessed, how the competency tool was used, and who led and/or supported the activity. It should be attached to the Goal setting worksheet and the final compiled plan.**

| Field | Details |
|---|---|
| Name of MPA / LMMA | |
| Country / Region | |
| Locality / Community | |
| Name of lead community representative | |
| Name of facilitator | |
| Name of documenter/note-taker | |
| Other team members | |
| Date(s) of planning session | |
| Was the LMMA Competency Tool completed prior to this session? | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| If not, which tool did you use previously, and on what date was that assessment conducted? | |
| Short description of how the tool was used | (e.g., individual or group responses; venue of the assessment; shared on screen or printed; results discussed) |
| Number of participants who attended the competency assessment | |
| Notes on participant composition | (e.g., gender balance, youth, elders, fisher reps) |
| Language(s) used during the session | |
| Additional notes | |

## *2. Goal setting using the LMMA Competency Review results*

Use this table to help the group translate competency assessment results into clear capacity goals. Ask participants to review their summary graphs or filled-in online results during this activity. For areas with low scores or mixed responses, ask: "What does this mean in practice?" Encourage the group to write goals in their own words and explain why these matter to the community.

**Example**

| Competency Area (from LMMA Tool) | Specific Competence | Key issues/ Gaps identified | Capacity goal | Why this matters |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monitoring and Activity Planning, management, monitoring | 1.2 Ability to use monitoring data to inform decisions | Low confidence in data use | Build capacity to collect and use basic fish catch data | To support local rules and track seasonal patterns |
| Inclusive Governance | 1.3 Women's participation in leadership and decision-making | Women not participating in decision-making | Encourage and support women in governance roles | To ensure fair representation and better decisions |
| Governance | 1.7 Ability to manage conflicts | Disputes between gear users unresolved | Strengthen ability to manage and resolve internal conflicts | To maintain community unity and compliance |
| Communication & Stakeholder Engagement | 2.1 Ability to share management updates with stakeholders | Community unsure what decisions are made | Improve transparency by regularly sharing updates with community | Builds trust and participation in MPA/LMMA activities |
| Marine Resources Management | 3.4 Ability to identify and protect important marine habitats | No clear protection zones for critical habitats | Map and agree on locally important habitats for special protection | Helps restore and conserve key fish breeding areas |

## *3. Linking the competencies to training goals*

Once the group has agreed on its capacity goals, the next step is to identify the knowledge, skills, actions and training resources available that can help them achieve their goals. This table helps turn goals into practical learning pathways. Encourage participants to think about:

- What would success look like in everyday practice?
- What specific skills or knowledge are needed to carry out those practices?
- What kinds of training, mentoring, or exchanges would help build those competencies?

Use **Booklet 2: A Compendium of MPA and LMMA Training Resources** to match the training needs with appropriate materials, tools, or methods already available.

**Example**

| Training Goal | Key tasks or behaviours needed | Competencies required | Suggested training Resources | Preferred delivery format |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Improve habitat monitoring | Conduct reef assessments; record basic observations | Observation skills, species ID, data recording, snorkelling | CORDIO Coral Reef Monitoring Manual | Hands-on field session |
| Improve women's involvement in leadership | Facilitate meetings; understand co-management rights | Communication, confidence, understanding local laws | COMRED and Blue Ventures Mentorship Guide | Storytelling and mentoring |
| Enhance conflict resolution in the BMU | Mediate disputes; hold listening sessions | Neutral facilitation, active listening, trust building | Managing MPAs: A Toolkit for the WIO | Role-play and peer sharing |
| Share updates with wider community | Prepare notices, run meetings, use local radio | Communication, translation, confidence | Blue Ventures Community Engagement Toolkit | Visual tools, demo broadcasts |
| Protect critical reef areas | Identify habitats, explain value to others, monitor use | Ecological knowledge, advocacy, community mobilisation | Blue Ventures LMMA Toolkit; CORDIO Coral Reef Monitoring Manual | Walkshops & visual mapping |

## *4. Discussing and summarising training preferences*

After identifying the capacity goals and training topics, it's important to ensure the learning process fits how people prefer to engage. Use this checklist to discuss language, delivery style, timing, and inclusion needs. Facilitators can run this in small groups or as part of a planning session with community members. Record the answers using the template to help shape the training plan.

**Example**

| Question | Notes from group discussion |
|---|---|
| What languages are best for running the training sessions? | Kiswahili, local dialect, simplified English |
| Do people prefer visual materials, stories, or hands-on demonstrations? | Storytelling works best for elders |
| What time of day or season is best for group sessions? | Low-tide afternoons, post-harvest season |
| Should men, women, and youth train together or in separate groups? | Women prefer initial sessions separately |
| Are there cultural or social norms we should consider in facilitation? | Avoid mixed-gender evening sessions |
| What barriers might prevent participation (e.g., childcare, mobility)? | Mothers may need child-minding support |
| What kinds of spaces or venues make people feel safe and included? | Women prefer sessions at the community hall, not beach shed |
| Are there preferred facilitators or local resource persons? | Use youth co-facilitators for digital tools |

## *5. Prioritising and scheduling training activities using the calendar and milestone tracker*

Before finalising your calendar, decide which training topics to do first. Prioritisation ensures that urgent or foundational competencies are addressed early, and that resources are used wisely. You can prioritise by urgency, readiness, seasonal timing, or ease of delivery by asking:

- What are the most urgent gaps to address?
- What trainings are required before others can be effective?
- Are there time-sensitive opportunities (e.g., open fishing season, new regulation)?
- What can be done quickly to build momentum?
- Which trainings relate to safety, legal compliance, or governance obligations?
- Which skills are needed before other training can happen (e.g., facilitation skills)?
- Which topics are most requested or needed by multiple groups?
- Do seasonal conditions affect delivery (e.g., field visits at low tide)?

**Example**

| Priority | Month | Planned activity | Target group | Who leads? | Learning milestone |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High | July | Gender and leadership workshop | Women and youth | Local NGO & women's rep | Women report more confidence speaking in groups |
| Medium | August | Conflict resolution role-play | BMU members | Senior facilitator & elder | BMU members test new approach to disputes |
| High | September | Habitat mapping and reef assessment | Fishers and youth | CORDIO-trained mentor | Map of sensitive reef areas created |
| Low | October | Community radio training + demo | Youth & leaders | Local broadcaster | First update aired on local radio |
| Medium | November | Exchange visit to nearby LMMA | Mixed group | IUCN (Project partner) | Ideas gathered from similar community efforts |

## *6. Creating a group learning plan*

Different community groups need different types of support to fully participate in MPA/LMMA governance. This table helps ensure trainings are tailored – so that leaders gain strategic skills, fishers strengthen practical knowledge, and women and youth have safe spaces to learn and contribute. Use this table after you've completed the training preferences and draft calendar. Record group-specific goals, preferred learning formats, and the potential mentors or facilitators who can help guide the process.

**Tips for facilitators:**

- Check this plan against your training calendar to ensure all groups are included.
- Use this to assign mentors or peer facilitators from within the community.
- Update it over time based on feedback from monitoring and reflection sessions.

**Example**

| Group | Capacity priorities | Preferred approach | Lead mentor or focal point | Notes on inclusion or support needs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Leaders | Conflict resolution, enforcement oversight, coordination | Peer learning, strategy sessions, coaching | BMU Chair, Local NGO rep | May need refresher on national policies |
| Women | Participation in planning, leadership, co-management | Story circles, mentoring, small group sessions | Women's committee lead, elder woman | Schedule sessions during low household activity times |
| Youth | Communication, patrol support, data recording | Exposure trips, gamified learning, buddy system | Youth leader, peer facilitator | Use visuals and encourage leadership roles |
| Fishers | Resource monitoring, compliance with rules | Hands-on training, reef walks, visual guides | Fisheries warden, lead fisher | Combine with gear distribution or community workdays |
| Elders | Conflict mediation, customary rules sharing | Storytelling, role-play | Community elder or respected leader | May need interpretation if tool is in English only |

# *7. Resource mapping*

To carry out the capacity development plan, communities need different kinds of support: trainers, learning materials, equipment, and sometimes funding. This table helps identify what is already available, what can be mobilised through partnerships, and what may need to be requested externally. Discuss these together:

- What resources do we already have?
- Who has offered to help or partner with us in the past?
- Which agencies, NGOs, or programs we can approach for support?
- What kinds of non-financial support (e.g., mentoring, venue, or equipment) could we tap?

**Tips for facilitators:**

- Use this as a working document and update it during each planning session.
- Consider mapping by resource type (e.g., people, spaces, tools) or by activity.
- Link this table to the milestones in the training calendar to identify what needs to be ready when.
- **Be flexible and adaptable:** Sometimes the availability (or lack) of resources will affect which trainings can happen first. Revisit your calendar and priorities regularly based on what is possible.

**Example**

| Type of support | Local source | Regional/ National source | Notes/ Contacts | Status (available, need to request, explore) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Training facilitation | MIHARI staff, community educators | WIOMPAN trainers, LMMA Network resource persons | CORDIO, IUCN, TNC, WWF | Available (MIHARI), Request (WIOMPAN) |
| Training materials | Existing manuals in local language | Booklet 2 training compendium, national guidelines | Translations may be needed | Available (partial) |
| Equipment | GPS, notebooks, logbooks from past project | Donations from gov. or conservation agencies | Fisheries office, university partnerships | Need to request |
| Mentoring/ Peer support | Experienced BMU leaders, youth mentors | Peer exchange with nearby MPA | Exchange visit planned in Q4 | Explore |
| Financial support | Small funds from BMU or local enterprise | Grant programs (e.g., government, donors) | Local government livelihood fund, WIOMSA small grants | Need to request |
| Venues/ meeting space | Community hall, school grounds | Training centre in district office | Check availability during harvest season | Available |
| Media & communication | Local radio station, poster printing service | NGO communication support | Can support outreach and reporting | Explore |

# *8. Capacity development plan summary*

The Capacity Development Plan is the final output of the participatory planning process. It brings together the key insights from the assessment and planning – summarising what the community wants to achieve, how they will get there, who will lead, and what support is needed. This plan should be developed after completing:

1. Capacity development planning session record;
2. Goal setting using the LMMA Competency Framework;
3. Linking competencies to training goals;
4. Training preferences;
5. Calendar and milestone tracker;
6. Group learning plan;
7. Resource mapping.

This plan should be shared with key partners (e.g., local governments, NGOs, learning providers) and revisited quarterly to reflect on progress, update priorities, and make adjustments. Encourage the community to see this plan as a living document, which they can adapt as their needs evolve.

**Tips for facilitators:**

- Use this table to bring together everything the group has worked on – from assessment results to activity planning. It serves as the summary and guide for implementation.
- After the Capacity Development Plan is finalised, **compile and attach all the filled-out worksheets** from earlier steps (goal setting, training mapping, preferences, group plans, calendar, resource mapping). These serve as a **"memory" of the full discussion,** helping with future updates, transitions, or external partner engagement.
- Treat this plan as a working document. Revisit it regularly, especially during quarterly check-ins or when priorities shift.

Share a summary version with key community stakeholders and support institutions to promote ownership and alignment.

**Example**

| Capacity Goal | Planned activity / Training | Target group | Lead Facilitators / Partners | Timeline | Training Tool (Booklet 2) | Support or resources needed | Notes / Follow-up |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strengthen women's leadership in MPA | Gender and leadership workshop + peer mentoring | Women and youth | Local NGO, Women's rep | July | | Transport | Plan refresher session in 3 months |
| Improve conflict resolution in BMU | Conflict resolution circle + listening sessions | BMU members | Community elder, NGO facilitator | August | | Venue, printed toolkits, facilitation snacks | Link to bylaws and enforcement follow-up |
| Build youth skills in reef monitoring | Practical reef walk + data collection workshop | Youth and fishers | Trained mentor, youth rep | September | CORDIO Reef Monitoring Manual | Reef access, logbooks, guides | Combine with next marine walk |
| Increase community engagement | Local radio training + broadcast of MPA updates | General public | Local broadcaster, youth group | October | | Airtime, script materials, facilitator | Collect feedback via informal village surveys |
| Protect critical marine habitats | Mapping workshop + habitat zoning planning | Mixed stakeholders | MPA committee, technical advisor | November | No specific tool in Booklet 2 | GPS devices, habitat maps, zoning facilitation guide | Consider co-developing local habitat protocols |
| Strengthen adaptive capacity | Quarterly reflection using Monitoring & Reflection Log | All stakeholder reps | LMMA facilitation team | Ongoing | Monitoring & Reflection Template | Meeting space, stationery, documentation team | Feed lessons back into governance updates |

# *9. Monitoring and reflection summary discussion*

Monitoring and reflection help ensure training activities lead to real learning and improved practice. This step helps communities and facilitators keep track of what has been done, assess what's working, and make changes if needed. This step is not about reporting. Use it to create a habit of pausing, listening, and adjusting based on experience by:

- Tracking implementation of capacity development activities
- Recording successes, challenges, and unexpected outcomes
- Documenting feedback from different community groups
- Making real-time adjustments to the plan when needed

**Tips for facilitators:**

- Hold informal debriefs after each training activity.
- Use this log to prepare for quarterly reflection meetings.
- Ask questions that invite both praise and criticism, like: "*What helped you learn?*" "*What confused you?*" "*What should we try next time?*"
- Encourage feedback from women, youth, and quieter participants. Rotate who speaks first or use small groups.
- Consider displaying simplified versions of this log on a visual board (e.g., "What have we learned this month?")

## Example

| Date | Activity reviewed | Resources used | What worked well? *(Look)* | What were the challenges? *(Think)* | What can we do differently? *(Act)* | Who shared this feedback? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14 August | Patrol training for fishers | | Clear visual materials were effective | Some found timing hard due to tides | Shorter sessions, better time coordination | Patrol team, BMU rep |
| 5 September | Women's storytelling circle | | Safe space created, active sharing | Some women hesitant to speak in large groups | Try smaller breakout groups | Women's committee facilitator |
| 20 September | Reef monitoring is practical | | Youth engaged, good teamwork | Confusion on data sheets | Add visuals and do dry run | Youth team leader |
| 3 October | Peer learning with nearby LMMA | | New ideas on enforcement shared | Some info hard to apply without resources | List follow-up support needed | Exchange participants, elder mentor |
| 10 October | Radio announcement and community feedback | | Many people heard the update | Some details misunderstood | Use local language, test script first | Local radio, community reps |

# Annex 2: Capacity development planning session worksheets

Below are blank worksheets that can be used for planning sessions.

# *1. Capacity development planning session record*

Fill in this form at the start of your planning session. This helps track who was involved, which site was assessed, how the competency tool was used, and who led and/or supported the activity. **It should be attached to the Goal setting worksheet and the final compiled plan.**

| Field | Details |
|---|---|
| Name of MPA / LMMA | |
| Country / Region | |
| Locality / Community | |
| Name of lead community representative | |
| Name of facilitator | |
| Name of documenter/note-taker | |
| Other team members | |
| Date(s) of planning session | |
| Was the LMMA Competency Tool completed prior to this session? | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| If not, which tool did you use previously, and on what date was that assessment conducted? | |
| Short description of how the tool was used | (e.g., individual or group responses; venue of the assessment; shared on screen or printed; results discussed) |
| Number of participants who attended the competency assessment | |
| Notes on participant composition | (e.g., gender balance, youth, elders, fisher reps) |
| Language(s) used during the session | |
| Additional notes | |

## *2. Goal setting worksheet using the LMMA Competency Review results*

| Competency Area (from LMMA Tool) | Specific Competence | Key issues/ Gaps identified | Capacity goal | Why this matters |
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## *3. Competency to training goals worksheet*

| Training Goal | Key tasks or behaviours needed | Competencies required | Suggested training resources | Preferred delivery format |
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## *4. Training preferences worksheet*

| Question | Notes from group discussion |
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| What languages are most suitable for training sessions? | |
| Do people prefer visual materials, stories, or hands-on demonstrations? | |
| What time of day or season is best for group sessions? | |
| Should men, women, and youth train together or in separate groups? | |
| Are there cultural or social norms we should consider in facilitation? | |
| What barriers might prevent participation (e.g., childcare, mobility)? | |
| What kinds of spaces or venues make people feel safe and included? | |
| Are there preferred facilitators or local resource persons? | |
| (additional questions) | |

## *5. Calendar and milestone tracker*

| Priority | Month | Planned activity | Target group | Who leads? | Learning milestone |
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## *6. Group learning plan worksheet*

| Group | Capacity priorities | Preferred approach | Lead Mentor or Focal Point | Notes on inclusion or support needs |
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## *7. Resource mapping worksheet*

| Type of support | Local source | Regional/ National source | Notes/ Contacts | Status (available, need to request, explore) |
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## *8. Capacity development plan summary*

| Capacity Goal | Planned activity / Training | Target group | Lead Facilitators / Partners | Timeline | Training Tool (Booklet 2) | Support or resources needed | Notes / Follow-up |
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## *9. Monitoring and reflection log template*

| Date | Activity reviewed | Resources used | What worked well? (Look) | What were the challenges? (Think) | What can we do differently? (Act) | Who shared this feedback? |
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