



Background paper to the guidelines:

Results of multi-stakeholder partnerships
– social, ecological and economic impacts at local level

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This background paper to the [guidelines](#) on the impacts of multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) is intended for those who want to examine more closely the impacts of MSPs at the local level, and how they are achieved. It summarises the research methods and methodological aspects, as well as the open topics researchers would like to see addressed, and it offers an overview of the complete research results. The literature used for the paper is listed with relevant links in the final section.

Research on impacts of MSPs observed at local level

Research literature: In order to search for relevant literature, a list of possible keywords was first established. This list was used at university libraries, the German National Library, the UN SDG Partnerships Platform and in online search engines to identify sources (primarily scientific and peer-reviewed, as well as ‘grey literature’) that appeared particularly relevant to the research question. Literature in English, German and Spanish was considered.

While the search was detailed and comprehensive, it does not claim to be exhaustive. For this reason, the characteristics of the literature presented below and the results compiled can be regarded only as excerpts of the empirical findings to date.

Over 100 publications were evaluated. Publications concerned with the need for and/or (fundamental) criticism of MSPs, or which discuss the design and success factors of MSPs, without being based on systematic empirical studies were eliminated. Likewise excluded were publications on the design of methodologies and on instruments for impact analyses.

In the presentation and discussion of impacts in this paper, more than 30 (empirical) studies were included. Around half of these publications are based on the analysis of three or more MSPs. Two publications were based on the analysis of two MSPs. Larger samples (such as the 89 MSPs analysed by Herens et al. 2022) are very rare. All other studies are individual case studies and are based on the analysis of one MSP each. Some of the studies recorded MSP impacts and/or the existing literature on three or more MSPs, while others surveyed perceptions of the impacts by participating and/or external stakeholders (e.g. Obereke & Stacewicz 2018; Barletti et al. 2021).

Many of the publications use qualitative analytical methods such as literature reviews, interviews and focus groups with participants and/or experts. Analyses or more complex quantitative methods of data collection (observation; standardised survey) or evaluation (such as factor or regression analyses), as well as combinations of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis methods were less common. Often the analyses focus on theoretical or methodological approaches, with individual case analyses used as examples. Meta-analyses and comparisons of many MSPs across different sectors or regions are very rare (e.g. van Ewijk & Ros-Tonen 2021 or Herens et al. 2022, whereby they each look at only one sector and one region).

MSPs are examined that are active in nearly all sectors, such that they address all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Many of them are found in the agriculture and forestry sectors, with a number of them (e.g. RSPO, RTRS, FSC) appearing to be among the best-analysed MSPs. This may be because these MSPs that were the subject of multiple studies are among the largest and oldest partnerships, and international cooperation traditionally focuses heavily on this sector. In addition, these are partnerships that generally (should) clearly involve rights holders at local level, namely the farmers and agricultural workers, making them particularly relevant for this research. Finally, the disproportionately large number of agriculturally oriented MSPs may also be explained by the fact that the University of Wageningen (Netherlands) is not only one of the largest agricultural universities in the world, but also hosts one of the largest and most active centres of research, advisory services and training for MSPs (Centre for Development Innovation, CDI), which has presumably also driven the establishment of MSPs in this area.

The different types of MSP (service, knowledge, standardisation) appear to be equally represented in the literature analysed here. The MSPs examined are widely distributed regionally, with most of the studies assessing MSP impacts in (sub-Saharan) Africa, South America and South and South-East Asia.

Most of the MSPs analysed largely meet the definition of Partnerships2030 (P2030): stakeholders from at least three different sectors work together as equals through an organised and long-term engagement in order to contribute to the common good or to sustainable development. However, it must be pointed out that some publications study samples of MSPs which do not all contain partner organisations from three or more stakeholder groups.

Reports from MSPs: In addition, around a dozen MSP websites were searched for publications on their own impacts. This concentrated on the MSPs that were studied most frequently in the literature, as well as large and longer-established MSPs where it can be assumed there has (already) been more impact assessment. At the same time, an attempt was made to consider as many types of MSP as possible. All of the MSPs listed here publish their own impact reports.

Overall, it can be said that the reports by large MSPs such as Gavi, the Global Fund or the Global Water Partnership are very detailed, but they mainly feature statements about the fulfilment of key performance indicators, such as the number vaccinations administered, while providing little information on (other) impacts at local level or only indirect conclusions. Nevertheless, they often provide qualitative information in a storytelling approach, such as examples of success stories or interviews with rights holders, either complementing quantitative statistics or standing alone. This results in a mixed picture that reveals gaps with regard to the observation of impacts.

Another important source of information about impacts at local level is provided by MSP activity reports, which are often much more specific than scientifically collected data.

However, the quantity of data is again limited by preselection, because it is only the MSPs that have published their impacts that are analysed. A significant proportion of MSPs do not publish their impacts, which means that smaller MSPs in particular are excluded. This also applies to scientific publications, however.

Some MSPs' activity reports are less than (self-) critical about the causality of measurable changes (attribution versus contribution), tending to interpret observed changes as the impact of their own work, even if the causal relationship might not be clearly verifiable.

For these guidelines, a number of selected activity reports were analysed to complement the research findings with additional data – provided the reported data and its presentation are of good quality, i.e. collected independently and transparently and interpreted in a comprehensible manner.

Methodological limitations: In summary, it can be said that it is challenging to make empirical observations and measurements and to attribute impacts in international cooperation – especially in the case of complex, dynamic ‘entities’ such as MSPs, which usually also include various MSPs at country and local level and cooperate with different working groups on different subtasks. It can also be assumed that small, local or sub-national MSPs and/or those initiated by local NGOs in particular have few resources for monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL).

In this context, the nature of the objectives held by an MSP and its theory of change are also important: some MSPs have relatively easily quantifiable objectives (e.g. number of people receiving medical treatment), while others have objectives that require numerous indicators to be recorded, only some of which can be quantified – for example, sustainability along supply chains; better governance, etc. Broad-based, global MSPs, which support a lot of exchanges, learning and networking but implement fewer specific projects, are also difficult to measure in terms of their impact. This applies in particular to their local-level impacts, which are especially indirect.

It is usually difficult, therefore, to attribute specific, measurable changes in target indicators (impacts) to specific MSP activities, and rarely possible to do so unequivocally. It is easier to demonstrate that MSPs contribute to observed changes, though it is difficult to quantify.

The objectives and indicators that an MSP pursues or reports on are determined in part by donors, who in turn have preferences for certain types of objectives and indicators. For example, some private foundations (such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) are known to prefer funding projects that can have (easily) measurable results (see Gavi), while systemic transformation projects with poorly measurable results tend not to be funded.

As Guijt and Wageningen CDI note (Structured Scan 02: General Observations; see also Guijt 2020), the monitoring and evaluation of MSPs is not harmonised, and there is a general lack of data on effectiveness. Those MSPs that do provide information use different indicators to measure and report on their activities, performance and results. Some rely on secondary data (e.g. national statistics), which may be insufficient for them to assess their own effectiveness. The large and well-funded MSPs in particular are beginning to invest in more robust surveys. This will improve the availability of MEL evidence, but at the same time raises the question of resources and capacity for continuous implementation across all MSPs.

Research desiderata

The research conducted here is most certainly not complete. For example, it does not include literature published in languages other than English, German or Spanish. It also lacks evaluation results from MSPs or MSP projects that are not found under keywords associated with MSPs, or that can only be found in a summarised form, or that are only available in confidential documents, such as in evaluations of international cooperation by donor countries.

Nevertheless, some important open research questions can be mentioned here:

- Standardisation MSPs should be examined in a nuanced manner with regard to their impacts at different levels (e.g. along the value chain). There are indications that the impacts at local level may differ from impacts on trade or in importing countries (see van Hille 2018, for instance).
- More research on different MSP strategies in the agricultural sector is needed to find out whether it is more promising for MSPs to focus on a single product or several products, what role intermediaries play, and how small and micro farmers can best be integrated into the value chain (see e.g. van Wijk & Kwakkenbos 2012).
- A deeper understanding of inclusion and participation is needed: under what conditions is the participation of which actors possible, and how does the process of inclusion work? There is a need for a 'deeper integration of processual perspectives' in MSP research (instead of understanding inclusion as bivariate – either inside or outside) with a contextual understanding of the conditions for inclusion in the respective value chains (see, for example, Schouten & Vellema 2019).
- Developing methods that are relevant at local level can be time-consuming and costly. Further research should be conducted on how local stakeholders can participate in MEL processes and how this data can feed into the further development of an MSP.
- In general, it can be assumed that globally active partnerships that also report on their work and which operate in English or another globally widely used language are disproportionately represented among the MSPs analysed to date. MSPs at a local or sub-national level are particularly under-researched. While there may be more such MSPs than have been recognised so far, they may also deliver more and/or different results, especially for local rights holders, and have different success factors than global MSPs. More research on these MSPs could also raise awareness among policy-makers and donors, and thus strengthen and support local and sub-national MSPs.

Observed impacts

The empirical studies analysed report a wide range of impacts, which are summarised in the tables below:

- positive impacts of specific MSPs
- other, cross-MSP impacts
- undesirable impacts of MSPs that indicate risks.

Positive impacts of MSPs

| SDG(s) | MSP | Published positive impacts | Sources |
|-----------------------|--|--|---|
| 1, 2, 5, 8, 15 | Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) | <p>Participation in the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) has helped farmers in India and Pakistan to boost their incomes, particularly by reducing expenditure on fertilisers and (in Pakistan) pesticides. Capacity development through BCI was perceived by farmers as effective, valuable and impartial.</p> <p>The BCI reports impacts at local level on the basis of a variety of social, economic and ecological indicators in 5 of the 15 participating countries. Reports include lower water consumption and pesticide and fertiliser use, as well as higher yields and profits for farmers. Child labour has been reduced and the participation of women in training and work has increased.</p> | <p>Ghori et al. 2022</p> <p>Better Cotton Initiative 2021</p> |
| 1, 15 | West African Sorghum Chain Development (WASCD) | <p>West African Sorghum Chain Development is an MSP whose aim is to use locally grown sorghum instead of imported barley malt for local beer production. Five initiatives in four countries supported the establishment and stabilisation of the market for sorghum through fixed contracts and farmers' organisations. Capacity development (supported by local NGOs) and better access to lower-interest credit led to the increased use of certified seeds, improved production management, higher production and better product quality.</p> | <p>Van Wijk & Kwakkenbos 2012</p> |

| SDG(s) | MSP | Published positive impacts | Sources |
|----------|---|---|---------------------------|
| 1, 4, 15 | Enabling Rural Innovation (ERI) in Africa | <p>Key outcomes of the Enabling Rural Innovation (ERI) in Africa partnerships included the improved capacity of farmer groups to negotiate, identify and access markets, and generate information through experimentation and the participatory development of innovation. Many participants considered capacity building to be one of the most interesting and rewarding components of ERI partnerships at the individual level. Typical examples of the benefits of partnerships for individual employees of partner organisations include increased skills, knowledge, self-confidence, self-esteem and career opportunities. ‘The biggest change was in skills in experimentation, negotiation, and looking for markets as well as ability to plan, learn, reorganise, and cope with change.’ (p. 279)</p> <p>‘A number of individuals have been promoted within their organisations or given more responsibilities and public recognition within their organisations. Some people have been able to move to better jobs in other organisations, while others are increasingly recognised as „expert facilitators“ offering consultancy services to other organisations. The majority of field staff have had opportunities to travel outside their countries, participating in professional meetings, making presentations and interacting with a range of professionals. This has increased confidence, exposure, self-esteem and social status, and was often cited as an important benefit for individual growth.’ (p. 281)</p> | Ghori et al. 2007 |
| 1, 4, 15 | Sustainable Development Programme for Narino’s Coffee Growing Families (Colombia) | The projects enabled 1,960 smallholder coffee-growing families to improve their position in the coffee value chain by avoiding middlemen and concluding fixed purchase agreements, allowing them to make higher profits. They were able to preserve the local tradition of coffee cultivation and learned to produce higher-quality coffee. This also prevented the forced migration and displacement of coffee growers in Nariño. The participants also reported stronger cohesion and better cooperation in their communities. | Payandeh & Pfisterer 2014 |
| 1, 15 | Chamba Valley Partnership, Zambia | ,The Chamba Valley agricultural partnership has also introduced some tracking of its impact, showing that 10 of the possible 98 farmers in its catchment region are selling produce through the partnership. The partnership guarantees sales and prices in return for a commitment to improved quality and targeted production.’ (Reid & Rein 2008, p. 22) | Reid & Rein 2008 |
| 1, 15 | Xinshe ,Forest–River–Village–Ocean’ Eco-Agriculture Initiative, Taiwan | The research findings reveal the importance of: (1) locally sensitive boundary setting and checking by means of inclusive and participatory processes; (2) various facilitation tools and engagement strategies for continuity of multi-stakeholder interest and engagement; (3) five socio-ecological perspectives of the Satoyama Initiative for setting environmental and socio-economic objectives; (4) regular, consistent and locally sensitive monitoring and evaluation tools for the effectiveness of adaptive co-management; and (5) conducive conditions (relational, knowledge and political resources) for promoting the Xinshe ILSA-related experiences. | Karimova & Lee 2022 |

| SDG(s) | MSP | Published positive impacts | Sources |
|----------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| 2, 3, 4 | Integrated Community-led School Nutrition, Bangladesh | The most important results of this MSP programme include strengthening the local value chain, reducing hunger and malnutrition, reducing the number of school drop-outs, increasing school attendance and achieving a very high level of political will. | Kar 2014 |
| 3 | The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) | <p>The Global Fund has made a decisive contribution to providing antiretroviral therapies for 7.3 million people infected with HIV, testing and treating 12.3 million people for tuberculosis and providing 450 million mosquito nets to protect against malaria. Between 2005 and 2015, mortality from these diseases fell by 40 per cent thanks to the enormous spread of these measures and their financing by the Global Fund.</p> <p>In 2021, the Global Fund ensured that 23.3 million people received antiretroviral therapy for HIV. 5.3 million people were treated for tuberculosis and 133 million mosquito nets were distributed.</p> <p>Average life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa rose from 52.3 to 65.7 years between 2002 (the year the Global Fund was founded) and 2019. Progress in the fight against HIV, tuberculosis and malaria accounts for an increase in life expectancy of 6.9 years.</p> | OECD 2015; The Global Fund 2022 |
| 3 | Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance | Since 2000, 981 million children have been immunised against life-threatening diseases. This means that Gavi's work has prevented 16.2 million deaths. The economic benefits from prevented diseases, deaths and long-term disability amount to over USD 185 billion. | Gavi 2021 |
| 4 | Global Partnership for Education (GPE) | Since 2002, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has enabled 82 million girls in its partner countries to receive an education. In total, 160 million additional children have been able to go to school thanks to GPE's commitment. | GPE 2023 |
| 5 | Family Planning 2020 | Family Planning 2020 coordinated activities with donor countries and in over 30 developing countries to facilitate women's access to contraceptive information and materials. More than half of these countries have developed national family planning plans and integrated them into their budgets. In 2013, bilateral funding by governments for family planning programmes increased by nearly 20 per cent and an additional 8.4 million women and girls gained access to modern contraceptives. | Suzman 2015 |
| 6, 11 | Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP) | Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP) is dedicated to improving water supply and sanitation in peri-urban slums and informal settlements. By 2011, the MSP had implemented nine projects (output) and, according to its own figures, provided 335,000 people with access to clean drinking water (outcome). | Beisheim 2011 |

| SDG(s) | MSP | Published positive impacts | Sources |
|----------------|--------------------------|---|--|
| 6, 1, 2, 3, 11 | Global Water Partnership | <p>The Global Water Partnership (GWP) reports that it supported water resources and climate resilience investments worth more than EUR 1.5 billion between 2010 and 2020. By 2025, the GWP aims to support the advancement of water security in 60 countries and 20 transboundary basins with a combined population of over four billion people. Many individual impacts at local level are reported in impact stories. These include the integration of integrated water resource management (IWRM) into national and sub-national development and economic plans; the establishment of local and national multi-stakeholder processes for the management of drinking water, irrigation and wastewater; the realisation of investments in the water sector; education and training for a wide range of relevant stakeholders; the preservation or restoration of local ecosystems and ecological resilience; increased and secured agricultural productivity; and the creation of jobs in the formal and informal sectors. Most importantly, the work of GWP, its national and local ,offshoots‘ and its partnership with donors, local civil society organisations and communities has provided many millions of people with access to safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation. These impacts have been achieved in cities and rural areas – mostly in developing countries, but also in drought-prone regions around the world, such as Mediterranean islands.</p> | <p>UN DESA Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform 2015; GWP 2023</p> |
| 7 | Clean Cooking Alliance | <p>The Clean Cooking Alliance (CCA) works with a global network of partner organisations to build an inclusive industry that can make clean cooking accessible to all. The Alliance helps to increase consumer demand for clean cooking, mobilise investment and support policies that enable the clean cooking sector to thrive. Since its founding in 2010, CCA says it has provided access to clean cooking fuels and technologies to over 400 million people worldwide and saved nearly 4.6 million lives from the harmful effects of household air pollution (HAP). Through its extensive communication, advocacy and convening efforts, CCA has also reached more than 100 million people and raised awareness of the issue (CCA 2023). To fulfil its duty of accountability and establish evaluations as evidence-based learning, CCA has developed a comprehensive Monitoring & Evaluation Framework which includes CCA’s Theory of Change (CCA 2020).</p> | <p>CCA 2020; CCA 2023</p> |

| SDG(s) | MSP | Published positive impacts | Sources |
|--------|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| 8 | Bonsucro | <p>Bonsucro, the largest MSP for promoting sustainability in the sugarcane value chain, addresses occupational safety and decent work:</p> <p>Worker safety, measured by accident rates: certified operators and workers report a significant drop in accidents with average reductions of 16 per cent in mills and 19 per cent in farms over five years of certification.</p> <p>Decent work, measured in terms of maximum working hours per week: the average maximum hours per week drop by 10 per cent in mills and by 9 per cent in farms over five years of certification.</p> <p>Adequate living wage, measured by the ratio of minimum wage to wage paid: to achieve Bonsucro certification, producers must pay at least minimum wage as set by their local legislation. The data shows that over time, the level of pay above the national minimum wage increases in both certified farms and certified mills. In the first year of certification, wages for the lowest-paid workers are on average 19 per cent higher than the minimum wage at mill level and 15 per cent higher than the minimum wage at farm level. After five consecutive years of certification, wages for the lowest-paid workers are on average 23 per cent higher than the minimum wage at mill level and 20 per cent higher than the minimum at farm level.</p> | Bonsucro 2022 |
| 9 | Kenya ICT Action Network | <p>The Kenya ICT Action Network (KICTANet) is a multi-stakeholder think tank for policy formulation in the field of information and communication technology. Its work includes stakeholder engagement, capacity building, research and policy advocacy (KICTANet 2023). Since its inception in 2004, the MSP has acted as a catalyser in the participatory development of an ICT policy framework in Kenya. Even after the adoption of the policy framework, the MSP has had a major impact on the ICT sector, contributing to the adoption of the Kenya ICT Master Plan and the regulatory approval of M-Pesa and voice over internet protocol (VOIP) services in the country. It also participated in discussions leading to the drafting and adoption of the National Cyber Security Strategy (2014) and coordinated public participation in consultations such as the 2014 African Union Convention on Cyber Security.</p> | UNESCO 2017, KICTANet 2023 |
| 10 | Partnership for Sustainable Textiles | <p>The Partnership for Sustainable Textiles (PST) advocates for a textile and clothing industry that is socially and environmentally responsible and corruption-free, one that respects the rights of all employees, protects the climate and the environment, and operates with integrity within the planetary boundaries. The MSP addresses four focal topics in the sector, including grievance mechanisms and remedy. The 2022 Annual Report outlines various measures at country level. For example, the Partnership supported 16 suppliers in Pakistan with establishing internal grievance structures. In India, it supported 40 spinning mills in setting up internal complaints committees with which 2,078 complaints/incidents were resolved.</p> | Partnership for Sustainable Textiles 2023 |

| SDG(s) | MSP | Published positive impacts | Sources |
|--------|--|---|-------------------------|
| 11, 16 | Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST) | CoST's work aims to improve information disclosure and civil society participation in the construction sector. In some countries, cases were documented in which transparency about plans, awards and contracts led to infrastructure projects being changed or construction projects being cancelled – in particular due to excessive costs or a lack of safety, e.g. for public roads and bridges. Rights holders were thus protected from risks and public budgets were protected. | Brockmyer & Fox 2015 |
| 12 | Food Waste Challenge | The Food Waste Challenge in the Netherlands addressed the problem of food waste, particularly in the hospitality industry. A multi-stakeholder partnership was established to help the Dutch hospitality industry prevent food waste by means of a 'Food Waste Challenge'. In the challenge's first edition, a large-scale field experiment with 172 participating restaurants, food waste decreased by 21 per cent. Interventions were used to bring about changes in the behaviour of guests and staff. | De Visser-Amundson 2022 |
| 13 | SEED Initiative | SEED is a global partnership for action on sustainable development and the inclusive green economy. SEED supports innovative small and growing, locally owned businesses in developing countries with the integration of social and ecological benefits in their business model. SEED offers programmes for direct company support to promote the establishment and scaling up of climate-friendly enterprises (SEED 2023a). One of these programmes is the SEED Replicator Programme, which supports participants in workshops to identify opportunities to start a business, generate impact, come up with their own ideas and innovate business models. The workshops also aim to integrate and replicate existing best practices and adapt proven business models. To date, the SEED Replicator Programme has trained more than 2,130 entrepreneurs in over 84 workshops and developed over 214 replication plans (SEED 2023b). | SEED 2023a, SEED 2023b |
| 14 | Marine Stewardship Council | The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), a standardisation partnership, was founded in 1997 with the aim of steering global fisheries in a more sustainable direction and preventing overfishing through a certification programme with strict ecological requirements. (...) In the search for solutions, in 1997 the MSC programme was established on the basis of an initiative of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), an environmental organisation, and Unilever, a food company at the time. Its market-based approach is a lever for concrete, long-term improvements in global fisheries. (...) Today, 25 years later, the MSC programme has achieved worldwide application and recognition. Over 5,000 companies worldwide have included sustainability in their fish and seafood sourcing policies. More than 500 large and small fisheries around the world have been motivated to scrutinise their practices, change them where necessary and become certified to the MSC environmental standard. To date, these fisheries have brought about over 2,000 concrete improvements for our oceans: less bycatch, more protected areas, stricter controls and innovative research.' | MSC 2022 |

| SDG(s) | MSP | Published positive impacts | Sources |
|--------|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 14, 2 | Shrimp Partnership | Partner organisations from Indonesia, Malaysia and the Netherlands cooperate in the Shrimp Partnership. To build new shrimp farms, mangrove forests are regularly destroyed. This partnership has carried out a number of projects above all on food safety and sustainability, but has had little influence on debates about the sustainability of shrimp. | Visseren-Hamakers 2013 |
| 15 | German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa | <p>Of the 11 goals of the Cocoa Forum, particularly noteworthy in the 2021 report are the results related to goal 10 (increasing the share of sustainable cocoa in products sold in Germany): indicators measuring transparency and traceability in value chains show a significant increase: ‘The estimated share of the German market covered by member reporting increased from almost 40 per cent to 88 per cent between 2020 and 2021.’ (p. 17)</p> <p>However, as little progress was made in other areas and some other indicators and metrics are linked to goal 10, the authors emphasise that the data for 2021 indicate ‘that further efforts are needed.’ (ibid.)</p> | Buama et al. 2023 |
| 15 | Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) | <p>In conflicts over local resources such as land, MSPs can be used to provide evidence in favour of or against certain land use plans (e.g. palm oil plantations). These potential benefits also justify the stakeholders’ interest in participating in MSPs and having a powerful position in their governance.</p> <p>MSPs can also create coalitions between local communities and NGOs that combine their data and knowledge to gather evidence against the interests of powerful companies, for example.</p> <p>RSPO developed a new system for recording the impact of MSPs and used it for the first time in 2022. After reviewing the available data and comparing it with the SDGs, the impacts are recorded using 15 Impact Indicators in seven Impact Themes. Examples of impacts achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USD 4.03 million from the RSPO Smallholder Support Fund has supported 38,597 farmers across 12 countries since 2013. That constitutes 71 per cent of currently certified independent smallholders. • 78 per cent of human rights-related complaints cases have been brought to a conclusion, including cases related to land, FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent), labour and gender. • The production of certified sustainable palm oil increased by nearly 900,000 tonnes, an increase of 6.3 per cent compared to the previous year. <p>RSPO certification has significantly reduced the use of pesticides and herbicides in favour of natural biological methods.</p> | Köhne 2014 RSPO 2023 |

| SDG(s) | MSP | Published positive impacts | Sources |
|--------|---|--|-----------------------------|
| 15, 16 | Land reform process in South Africa (national MSP), supported by the International Land Coalition (ILC) | When stakeholders participate in an MSP, the partners assume that they support the agreed goals. This supports the perception of positive interdependence, as the achievement of the goals is assumed to be jointly dependent on everyone. This in turn supports communication, interaction and cooperation between the partners. At the same time, negative interdependencies exist in which participants can only achieve their goals at the expense of others achieving their goals. In the land reform process in South Africa, the existence of positive and negative interdependencies helped to set priorities in a participatory and inclusive manner. | Jansen & Kalas 2020 |
| 16 | Alliance for Integrity (Afln) | <p>The Alliance for Integrity publishes success stories about its results in individual countries. These are mostly qualitative impressions. To date there are 14 success stories from different countries and regions that describe the problems companies have had with corruption and what has changed as a result of training with Afln.</p> <p>One example is PARSEC, a medium-sized company that operates in the Brazilian civil engineering sector, has 40 direct employees and an annual turnover of around USD 3 million. In 2017 PARSEC had already implemented some control mechanisms to ensure transparent and clean business practices. With the aim of supplying large companies, PARSEC worked on its compliance management system, as it was aware that high integrity standards can promote business success. An Afln mentoring programme helped implement measures set out in PARSEC's Code of Ethics. In order to further strengthen the implementation of the Code, employees are required to consistently adhere to high standards of integrity. A comprehensive risk analysis also supports the company's strategic planning.</p> | Alliance for Integrity 2023 |
| 16 | Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) | FiTI publishes individual country reports. The respective country departments conduct regular analyses to check whether transparency standards are being met in the country. The impact is achieved by publishing information on the accessibility of data on fisheries, including in local languages and in graphic form. Suggestions are also made as to which information should be made more accessible in order to ensure transparency and enable all citizens and stakeholders to participate in the public discourse on fisheries. | FiTI 2023 |

| SDG(s) | MSP | Published positive impacts | Sources |
|-----------------|---|---|------------|
| 16 (and others) | Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD) | <p>The GPSDD reports impacts in individual countries and at regional level, which have been achieved through improved data and data access, including the following:</p> <p>The Open Institute in Kenya, with support from the Global Partnership, developed a sub-national data infrastructure for agriculture connecting smallholder farmers with government officials in Nakuru County. As a result, smallholder farmers now have near real-time access to better market prices, bringing higher profits from their produce. In Kenya, better data helps wildlife conservation groups find the best location for resettling endangered rhinos.</p> <p>In Sierra Leone, better data helped the government protect the mangroves and all citizens have better access to information on COVID-19.</p> <p>The partnership has helped farmers in Senegal determine crop prices more quickly and in Nigeria has helped to track COVID-19 cases and health centre availability.</p> <p>GPSDD initiated partnerships in Ghana that enabled satellite data to be used to protect water quality and to detect illegal mining and to disaggregate data so marginalised groups are counted.</p> <p>In Namibia, holistic, innovative and integrated civil registration and vital statistics and identity management systems help people obtain necessary papers, certificates and other services from the government.</p> | GPSDD 2020 |

Other cross-MSP impacts

| SDG(s) | MSP | Impacts of MSP | Sources |
|--------|---|--|---|
| 1, 15 | Standardisation MSPs in agriculture/food production | Standardisation MSPs can have different impacts for different partners. For businesses, which can label their products accordingly, a standard can be simple and useful. For farmers, things might look different: they have to invest time and resources to learn new techniques or use different materials (seeds, fertilisers, etc.). In addition, agro-ecological practices can be significantly more labour-intensive than other methods. | Van Hille 2018 |
| 1, 15 | Diverse | The analysis of several MSPs in the area of agricultural food production confirmed the positive impact on the incomes and living standards of poor smallholder farmers – with an increase in income of 23 to 55 per cent. However, this did not appear to be the case for the poorest small and micro farmers, who were less likely to be directly involved in the MSPs analysed. | Schouten & Vellema 2019; Ton et al. 2018 |
| 1, 15 | Various MSPs in the field of agriculture and food in sub-Saharan Africa – literature review | <p>A literature review of agriculture and food-related MSPs showed that MSPs can contribute to changing agricultural practices and improve the position of smallholder farmers. Among other things, the following impacts were achieved for the farmers involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active use of extension services • Higher crop yields • Better prices for agricultural products, increased income • Enhanced food security • Improved soil management, combating erosion, sustainable cultivation practices <p>Farmers in Burkina Faso began using improved seeds and, after sharing knowledge through an innovation platform, experimented with how to combine these seeds with traditional ones. The use of improved seeds was profitable when there was good rainfall, while the use of traditional seeds was more profitable with low rainfall. As rainfall was generally uncertain in the study area, the farmers' strategy was to combine both types.</p> <p>Agroforestry experiments co-designed by farmers, researchers and extension agents using a platform in Tanzania, combined with awareness-raising and training, had positive impacts on the adoption of agroforestry practices by households and on the performance of the trees planted. →</p> | Van Ewijk & Ros-Tonen 2021 |

| SDG(s) | MSP | Impacts of MSP | Sources |
|--------|--|---|---|
| | | <p>A platform with oil palm farmers in Benin achieved significantly more in terms of producing and distributing hybrid oil palm seedlings than previous oil palm development projects, thanks to co-learning between researchers from the national oil palm research institute and smallholder farmers. The innovation platform emphasised the importance of integrity and trust, facilitating shared nursery management experimentation and gathering evidence about practices that work or do not work for the farmers.</p> <p>Innovation platforms in Burkina Faso provided an effective space for the collective design, testing and discussion of new cropping systems and crop residue management models.</p> | |
| 2 | 89 MSPs in four countries (Bangladesh, Viet Nam, Ethiopia, Nigeria) – literature review, meta-analysis | <p>A study of n = 89 MSPs in four countries addressing food and food security investigated the extent to which the MSPs take inclusiveness into account, based on three criteria: inclusion of marginalised voices, inclusion of local communities and networks, and social differentiation among the participants.</p> <p>The results showed that consumer groups and farmers, as well as the private sector, were often not included in the MSPs, and/or they acted as isolated groups. In these cases it is helpful if the MSPs make it an explicit aim to bring consumers and producers together.</p> | Herens et al. 2022 |
| 15 | Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS), Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) | <p>Surveyed special interest groups positively assessed the role of the MSPs in promoting ecological sustainability in the affected raw materials sectors and for defining standards for good practices, with the work of the MSPs contributing to reduced agrochemical use and conservation of habitats. The MSPs have helped formalise documentation of agrochemical use, thereby promoting good management practices.</p> <p>In addition, BCI reported that the MSPs promoted capacity development among the farmers and included otherwise marginalised smallholders.</p> | Obereke & Stacewicz 2018; Riisgaard et al. 2019 |

Undesirable impacts indicating risks for MSPs

| MSP | Unwanted impacts | Sources |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| RSPO | Unequal distribution of power between actors can be reflected in unequal access to an MSP and its governance, so that the inequalities underlying conflicts (for example over land) also characterise access to the MSP and its decisions. | Köhne 2014 |
| RSPO, RTRS, BCI, FSC RSPO | Insufficient monitoring and evaluation of standards and their implementation contributes to the perception of ineffectiveness and lack of trust in the effectiveness of standards MSPs. MSPs are criticised for not addressing the power asymmetries between large multinational companies and NGOs. In many cases, audits contain subjective assessments, for example, with respect to land rights and related conflicts. Furthermore, in such cases certification is often granted (in accordance with the rules) as soon as a grievance mechanism or mediation has been set up (but without waiting for the results). | Obereke & Stacewicz 2018 Nesadurai 2013 |
| Diverse | Rapid growth in the market for a sustainable product can jeopardise consistent implementation of a standard in production countries. This can be due to the lack of capacity development among farmers (as yet), who are certified too soon, before they can produce reliably in accordance with the standards. This can delay a fundamental transformation of a sector and jeopardise the credibility of an MSP to the point that it is suspected of greenwashing. | Riisgaard et al. 2019 |

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