



Industry Guide

to the Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector (SRA)

September 2026

Acknowledgments

This guide was developed by the Consortium on Social Risks in Seafood, a collaboration between LRQA, Conservation International, FishWise, and Ocean Outcomes. The objective of the Consortium is to bring together practical, sector-specific tools that support the implementation of human rights due diligence (HRDD) processes. This work was made possible thanks to the Walton Family Foundation.



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An introduction to the Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector (SRA)

A Response to the Demand for Socially Responsible Seafood

With the increasing revelations of human and labor rights violations in the seafood sector, it may seem that the attention on these issues is sudden or recent. However, the human rights challenges confronting the seafood sector are ultimately part of a broader story of globalization. While global trade has generated economic growth, livelihoods, and access to affordable goods on an unprecedented scale, it has also created persistent pressures to produce more, faster, and at lower cost. In the absence of effective safeguards, those pressures can be passed down within supply chains, creating conditions in which human exploitation becomes possible. What is recent is the demand for socially responsible seafood in the marketplace.

It is common to recall [investigative journalism](#)¹ in 2014 that reckoned with direct evidence of modern slavery in shrimp supply chains in Thailand, igniting the demand for socially responsible seafood. However, it is important to recognize that pervasive issues across the fishing and aquaculture industries have been reported for decades. The International Labor Organization (ILO) recognized the fishing industry as one of the deadliest in [1999](#)², the United States Department of Labor Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor reports included hazardous child labor in many countries as early as [2009](#)³, and reports of human rights abuses in the shrimp aquaculture sector in Bangladesh have been reported as early as [1999](#)⁴.

A major driver for market-based approaches stems from a recognition by the United Nations that globalization was moving faster than governments' ability to regulate multinational firms, which culminated in the development of the [Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#)⁵, or UNGPs. The UNGPs outline clear responsibilities between the public and private sectors to identify, mitigate, and remediate adverse human rights impacts in global supply chains. It is these guidelines that form the basis of modern-day Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD).

The demand for socially responsible seafood was born out of many overlapping pressures. Due to existing recognition of the shortcomings of globalization and the need to better manage risks across all sectors to the persistent reports and relentless work of dedicated advocacy groups and investigative journalists, by the time the 2014 reports were released, the seafood sector accepted the emerging demand for social responsibility as a clear mandate of sustainable sourcing.

¹ Kate Hodal, Chris Kelly, and Felicity Lawrence, "Revealed: Asian Slave Labour Producing Prawns for Supermarkets in US, UK," *The Guardian*, June 10, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/jun/10/supermarket-prawns-thailand-produced-slave-labour>.

² International Labour Organization, "Fishing among the Most Dangerous of All Professions, Says ILO," December 13, 1999, <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/fishing-among-most-dangerous-all-professions-says-ilo>.

³ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, *2009 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 2010), https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2009/tda2009.pdf.

⁴ Emily Delap and Rosemary Lugg, *Not Small Fry: Children's Work in the Bangladesh Shrimp Industry* (London: Save the Children UK, 1999), <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/not-small-fry-childrens-work-bangladesh-shrimp-industry>.

⁵ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework* (New York and Geneva: United Nations, 2011), https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf.

A Definition of Socially Responsible Seafood

For decades, the seafood sustainability movement focused primarily on environmental performance in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. To this end, the definition of sustainable seafood did not include social indicators. Yet growing recognition of persistent human and labor rights abuses highlighted that seafood cannot be truly sustainable if workers' rights and well-being are ignored. In 2016-2017, Conservation International convened a diverse group of stakeholders to define a shared vision for socially responsible seafood, building on existing ILO and FAO frameworks and creating a foundation for coordinated action, investment, and market-based solutions. This became known as the [Monterey Framework](#)⁶.



Assessing Risks in Seafood Supply Chains

The Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector, or SRA, is an extension of the Monterey Framework, giving users a practical way to assess social risks in seafoods supply chains against the Framework's Principles. As a risk assessment, the SRA plays a critical role in the 'assess' step of the HRDD process. In the SRA, the Principles of the Monterey Framework are detailed in a set of indicators broken out thematically according to fundamental rights at work (primarily defined by the ILO) and other key internationally recognized best practices within the seafood sector (such as the FAO Guidelines for Small-Scale Fisheries). The risk of each indicator is defined by a series of data collection points that once collected in aggregate, result in a risk level: high, medium, or low. A complete list of the SRA Risk Indicators can be found the in the [SRA published online](#)⁷. These align with the [ILO Fundamental Instruments](#)⁸ (forced labor, child labor, occupational safety, etc.), as well as collective rights (access to grievance, customary use rights, etc.) and communities rights (livelihood security, economic opportunity to benefit, etc.).

The SRA and associated guidance are open access documents, meaning users can decide how to leverage the tool as part of their overall HRDD programming. The purpose of this document is to outline key ways in which industry can use the SRA to implement HRDD in the seafood sector, including the value of using the

⁶ John N. Kittinger et al., "Committing to Socially Responsible Seafood: Ocean Science Must Evolve to Meet Social Challenges in the Seafood Sector," *Science* 356, no. 6341 (June 2, 2017): 912–913, <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aam9969>.

⁷ Consortium for Social Risks in Seafood, *The Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector*, version 2.0 (October 2025), <https://riseseafood.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Social-Responsibility-Assessment-Tool-Mar2026.pdf>. [riseseafood.org]

⁸ International Labour Organization, "Conventions, Protocols and Recommendations," accessed September 18, 2026, <https://www.ilo.org/international-labour-standards/conventions-protocols-and-recommendations>.

SRA, how it can be implemented, and how to incorporate it into responsible sourcing programs to conduct ongoing HRDD processes.

The SRA vs. Audits & Certifications

When it comes to accountability in global supply chains, there is a complicated web of incentives and pressures at all levels of the supply chain that can make practical implementation of HRDD challenging. For example, end markets can be far removed from primary production. Although HRDD policies are increasingly holding end-market supply chain actors accountable for risks and rights violations within their supply chains, establishing accountability for the welfare of workers at the primary production level can be complex (Figure 1).

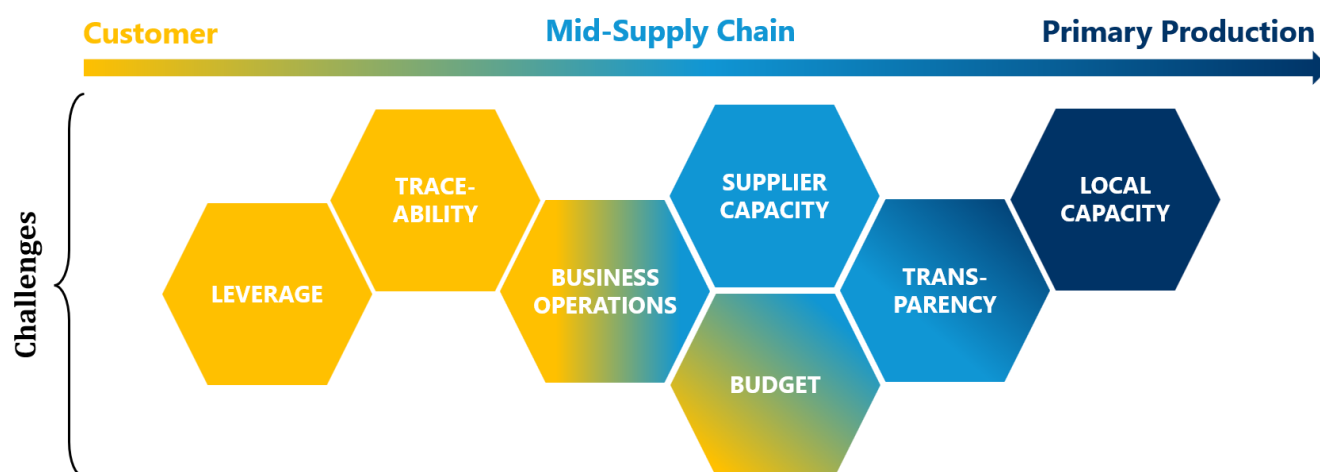


Figure 1. Challenges to HRDD implementation at different levels at the supply chain.

The UNGPs clearly outline roles and responsibilities of the public and private sectors, including governments, companies, and civil society. Voluntary, market-based approaches that companies take to meet the demand for socially responsible seafood are one piece of this puzzle, a contribution and responsibility of the private sector, but effective, sustainable improvements for workers ultimately rely on tripartite collaboration between government, employers, and workers. The SRA is one of many market-based tools intended to be leveraged as part of the HRDD process.

Many market-based approaches center around the concept of certifications and social audits. These are third-party programs that companies rely on to verify if their suppliers are complying with minimum standards, and they are typically required to maintain a commercial relationship. Many consumer-facing certifications in seafood only evaluate environmental risks, leaving a verification gap regarding human and labor rights. Other programs might cover both to varying degrees, and at the processing level (often tier 1), social audits are prevalent. Many of these programs focus on the outcome (*compliance*) but say little about the severity or likelihood (*risk*) of human or labor rights abuses in the supply chain. They are a snapshot in time, and if direct evidence of a violation is not found during an onsite visit, the report may be misinterpreted to communicate a site free of forced labor or child labor, which may not be the case. Audits

play an important role in the HRDD process, but by nature, are *compliance*-based rather than *risk*-based, and applying a risk-based approach is central to the UNGPs.

The SRA is a voluntary, market-based tool that shares some similarities with social audits and certification programs, while remaining distinct in its purpose, methodology, and application. It is a risk-based tool, analyzing data in aggregate to point where there is a risk of human or labor rights violations, even if the violation itself is not observed. The process is reliant on deep root cause analysis to understand and contextualize systemic issues that are leading to a violation, rather than focusing on the violation itself. This may mean that the root cause falls outside the sphere of influence of a company’s suppliers but nonetheless should be the target of mitigation and remediation to lead to more effective outcomes for workers.

Table 1: Summary of key differences between the SRA and social audits / certifications.

Variable	SRA	Social Audit or Certification
CONTEXT	Stronger emphasis on contextual information (e.g., desk research)	More centralized to a single unit of assessment, does not consider context as intently
METHODOLOGY	Emphasis on workers and how they are engaged throughout the entire SRA process	Typically implemented top down, only focused on workers during audit
ENGAGEMENT	Research and engagement with in-country organizations is a key element	Only considered best practice to engage with organizations in-country, but not commonly executed
RESULTS	Risk on a sliding scale from low to high, offering nuance to data collected	Pass/fail, compliance vs. non-compliance
ACTION PLAN	Focused on improvement and engaging with workers and can include systemic root causes and recommendations for multi-stakeholder collaboration.	Focused on corrective actions at the site / vessel level, often missing systemic root causes beyond the site-level.

Why should a company use the SRA?

The SRA was designed around a multi-stakeholder definition of socially responsible seafood and comprises a framework companies can use to action the UNGPs, and international conventions and best practices on decent work in fishing and aquaculture. In its development and subsequent revisions, rigorous stakeholder engagement was conducted, resulting in a tool that includes perspectives from diverse stakeholders in seafood supply chains, including unions, industry members, fishers, farmers, and other subject matter experts. Although the SRA on its own does not constitute the full HRDD process, the process and outputs from implementing the SRA can contribute as a key tool within the HRDD process (Figure 2).

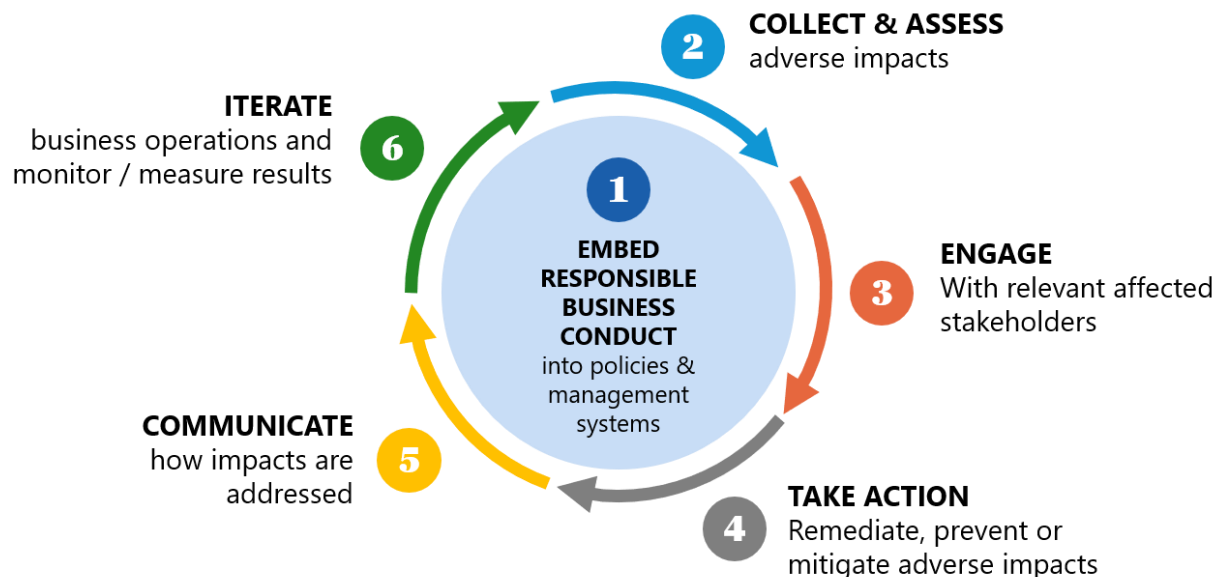


Figure 2. Steps of an HRDD process adapted by FishWise as part of the [Roadmap to Improve Seafood Ethics \(RISE\)](#)⁹.

Often when companies or other supply chain actors hear about risks in the seafood sector, they come from reports and investigations that perhaps do not mention their suppliers, or no direct link can be found to their supply chain. A company may be sourcing the same commodity from the same geography, but these reports say little about what individual companies can do to identify, mitigate, and remediate risks in their own supply chain. In other words, inherent risks that are revealed often lack relevant and specific context, which can lead to inaction. The SRA's main value proposition is its usefulness as the founding basis of a holistic HRDD process, providing context of inherent risks within the user's supply chain. Whether a seafood company, NGO, or pre-competitive collaboration, the user can be confident in the application of an objective framework that is centered around and for workers.

How do I use the SRA?

Building an HRDD Program Around the SRA

The SRA provides a framework upon which the HRDD process can draw to build a risk-based approach and budget against to ensure efficient allocation of resources. Developing a program based on the underlying principle that HRDD will be conducted via direct worker engagement will set the stage for a process where supplier expectations are clear, and conduct on vessel and at farms can be shaped accordingly. Conducting a full SRA requires direct engagement with workers and experts on the ground; therefore, setting a commitment about how the SRA will be used within an HRDD program ensures that worker engagement is at the core of the program. Here is how to leverage the SRA at each step:

⁹ RISE, "The Roadmap for Improving Seafood Ethics," accessed September 18, 2026, <https://riseseafood.org/roadmap/>.

1

EMBED

The SRA is a compilation of best practice standards that define social responsibility in the seafood sector. A company developing an HRDD program may use the Risk Indicators of the SRA as the basis upon which to define their supplier requirements and/or commitments. Objectives and key performance indicators may be based on reduction of risks identified in the SRA process, seeking to moving from high to medium to low risk over time.

2

COLLECT & ASSESS

The SRA comprises specific data collection points within each Risk Indicator. In collecting primary and secondary sources of data against this framework, the user is conducting a full risk assessment. This results in risk levels (high, medium, and low) assigned to each indicator. The result is context-specific risk identification within the supply chain which forms the basis of an action plan suited to target interventions at the worker level.

3

ENGAGE

Full application of the SRA entails direct stakeholder engagement at all stages in the process, most notably (and unique to the SRA), after the results have been analyzed. Engaging with stakeholders and workers on proposed actions resultant from SRA implementation can open up critical dialogue, and co-development of improvements become possible and are encouraged.

4

TAKE ACTION

Conducting an SRA serves to contextualize potential and real human and labor rights risks. The nuance of risk levels within the SRA allows the user to prioritize actions, and the action planning process delivers activities with clear roles and responsibilities, specific to the supply chain. This allows for budget and staffing to be allocated efficiently to deliver positive changes for workers.

5

COMMUNICATE

Risk results and actions taken to address identified risks can be easily communicated in the context of the SRA framework. Measurable impact over time can be tracked by regularly re-evaluating against the SRA, and progress can be communicated externally.

6

ITERATE

Delivering an action plan to reduce risks and remediate issues can be challenging. Throughout the process of completing an SRA and implementing an action plan, users will learn what works and what doesn't in the context of their specific supply chain. Asks of suppliers regarding social responsibility are often vague, however by conducting an SRA, users can help shape supplier expectations over time to be relevant, efficient, and effective, iterating as needed.

Programming the SRA

Companies across the seafood sector are at different stages of development and implementation when it comes to HRDD programming. This is often due to varying levels of available resourcing (including staffing and budget), diverse levels of engagement and leverage with their suppliers, and different business models and internal priorities influencing their approach to HRDD. Application of a risk-based approach means that regardless of the aforementioned conditions, each company can strategically work to meet their obligations to identify, mitigate, prevent, and remediate impacts in their supply chain under the UNGPs.

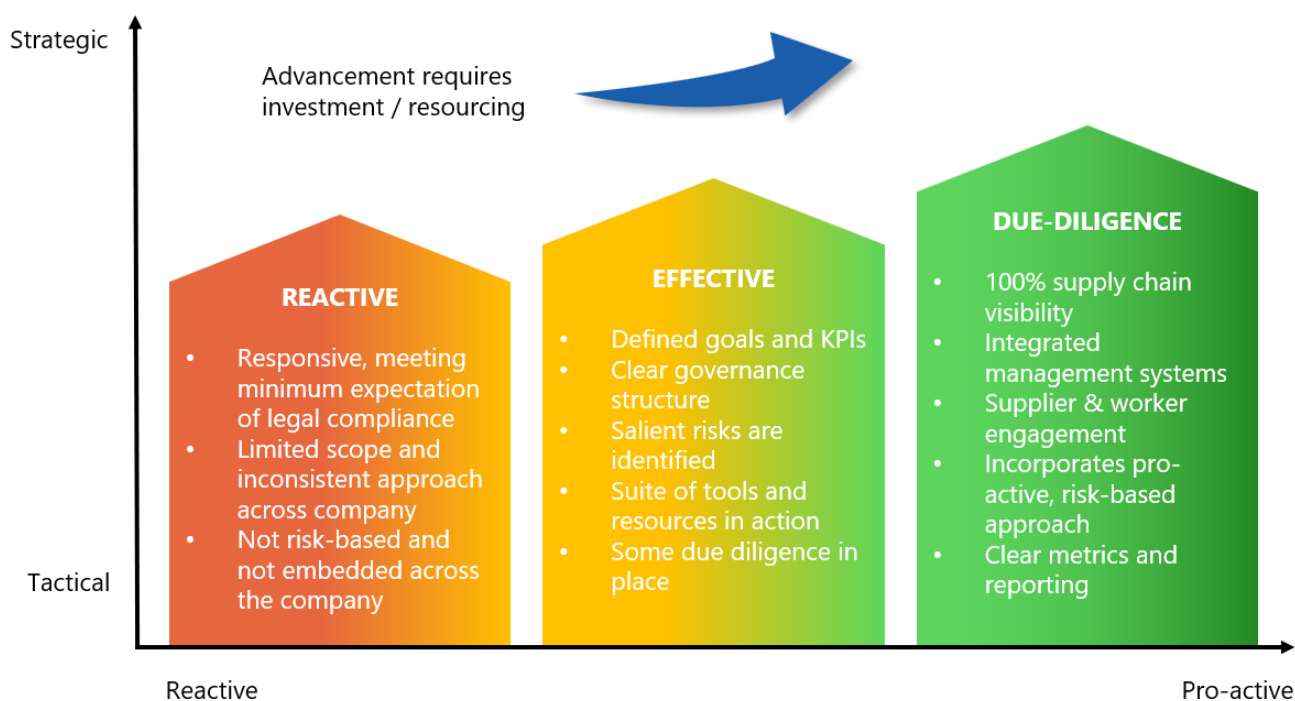


Figure 3. Defining HRDD program maturity from tactical to strategic, and reactive to proactive.

As an open access tool, the SRA can be adapted for use to meet companies where they are at and help set realistic expectations. In the absence of strategic programming, companies often hesitate as they feel the need to implement all-in programming (such as 100% audit coverage of all sites) that may not be feasible given internal constraints and/or priorities.

Variations to SRA use can be adapted from standard, full SRA implementation, which entails five main components (Figure 4):

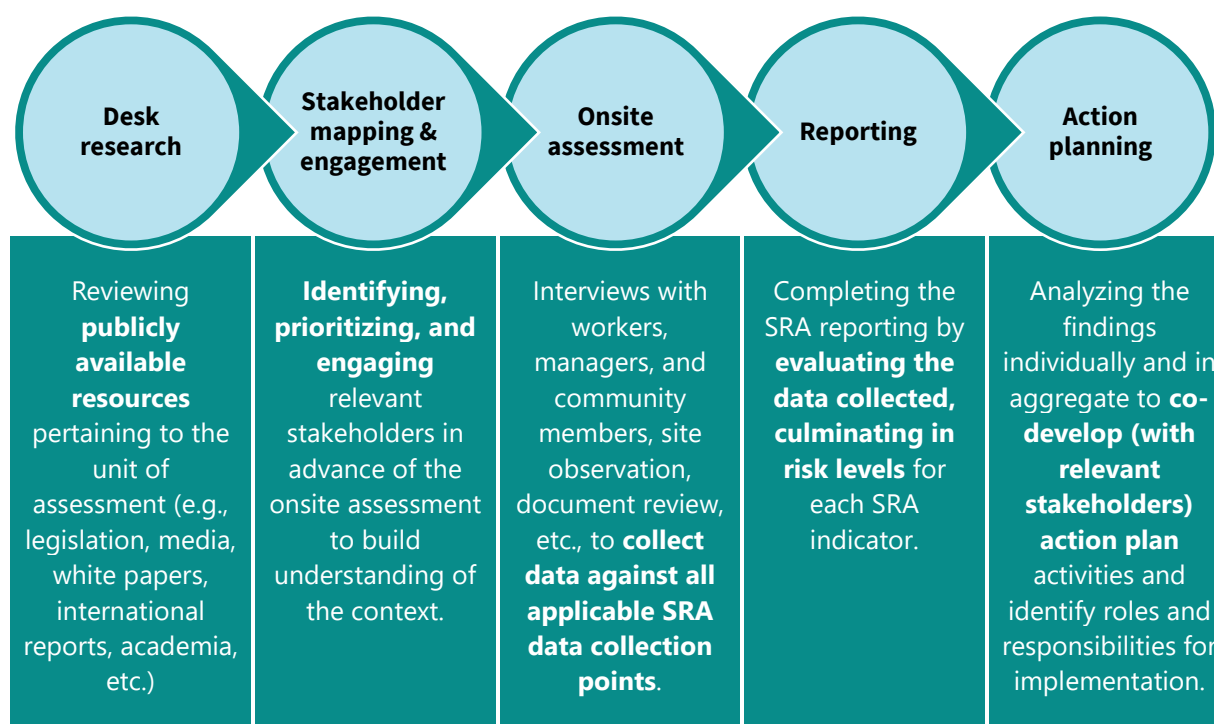


Figure 4. Steps included in best practice, standard SRA implementation.

In addition to these five components, the SRA itself is made up of 27 total Risk Indicators. Even when implementing the SRA, not all 27 will be applicable as certain indicators only apply to certain types of operations based on the characteristics of the fishery / farm (e.g., small-scale fisheries vs. industrial fisheries). Additionally, each Risk Indicator is evaluated independent of the others, which means that not all Risk Indicators need to be evaluated to complete an SRA. A minimum recommendation would be to evaluate SRA Risk Indicators that align with the [ILO 11 Indicators of Forced Labor](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/ILO%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labour%202025.pdf)¹⁰, however, depending on the research question, a completely different subset of Risk Indicators may be more appropriate.

Table 2 below describes use cases for the SRA. Although these applications vary greatly, there is one theme that users should adhere to: *any SRA project should be grounded in a specific research question*. This ensures that even when SRA implementation varies between supply chains, geographies, etc., the methodology and expectations set are defined by best practices uniquely designed to respond to the research question.

Table 2. SRA applications for HRDD programming.

Example Research Questions	SRA Application	Use Case	Implementation Steps
What can the data I already have tell me about systemic	Benchmarking / Equivalency	Evaluate aggregate supplier performance and	Map existing social audits to the SRA.

¹⁰ International Labour Organization, *ILO Indicators of Forced Labour: 2025 Revised Edition* (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2025), <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/ILO%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labour%202025.pdf>.

Example Research Questions	SRA Application	Use Case	Implementation Steps
social risks, and what actions should I prioritize?		identify where additional due diligence is necessary. Design specific supplier management/engagement activities based on trends and prioritize according to SRA risk levels.	Pull results from all sites in scope and aggregate findings against SRA data collection points.
How prepared are my suppliers to implement legal minimums and best practices for social responsibility?	Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ)	- Provide suppliers with clear expectations regarding human and labor rights and worker wellbeing. - Build supplier capacity to identify and mitigate their own risks.	Suppliers self-report against SRA Risk Indicators regarding policies and procedures they have in place to mitigate risks.
	Supplier engagement / internal assessment		Train suppliers on how to implement the SRA; suppliers complete their own assessment and share results and action plan.
How do actual social risks in my supply chain compare to what I know from public sources? What practical actions can I take to reduce risks in my supply chain?	Full SRA, regional or site-level	- Design a regional risk-based due diligence program for suppliers. - Identify specific remediation, mitigation, and prevention actions that can be executed at a site level.	- Implementation of the full SRA as described in Figure 4 above. - Regional SRA, including a sampling approach of all sites or suppliers in a region. - Site-level SRA to evaluate practices at individual sites.
	Partial SRA, regional or site-level	- Same as above, but reduced scope to focus on specific SRA indicators. - Validate or compare how suppliers are meeting Code of Conduct expectations. - Implement applicable FisheryProgress human rights and social responsibility requirements.	Select SRA Risk Indicators pertinent to a supplier Code of Conduct or tailored to a company's strategy or KPIs.
What is the lived experience of workers in my supply chain? What	Worker surveys	Define or verify supplier performance based on direct worker inputs.	Short survey of 20–25 questions framed against the SRA indicators, deployed with workers.

Example Research Questions	SRA Application	Use Case	Implementation Steps
changes are most important to them?			Deploy to a statistical sample of workers within the Unit of Assessment.
What impacts does our business have on the human and labor rights of those in my supply chain, and how can we reduce negative impacts?	Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA)	- Evaluate potential human rights impacts the business has in the supply chain. - Typically made publicly available and a valuable tool for communication.	- Full SRA, scoped to the full supply chain. - Also evaluate procurement practices at different levels in the supply chain.

Call to Action

Companies can take some immediate steps to identify practical approaches to mature their HRDD programming, and it is encouraged to consider where the SRA may fit into that strategy. There are some immediate steps all companies may consider:

1. Evaluate where your company sits on the maturity axes in Figure 3.
2. Set your intention: what are your company's priorities? Where will you set your level of ambition?
3. Review existing supply chain information and identify priority gaps in knowledge or coverage.
4. Prioritize: apply the principle of a risk-based approach, allocate resources efficiently, finding the sweet-spot activities that deliver against your HRDD commitments and have the greatest potential impact for workers.
5. Determine which SRA application will serve to close those priority gaps, whether it's data collection, prioritization, etc., and define your research question.

The HRDD process entails continuous improvement and iteration over time. The best advice for companies, no matter where they are at, is to get started.

SRA Case Study: Benchmarking

Background:

FCF Co. Ltd, a tuna supplier based in Taiwan, had been collecting vessel-level audit data and implementing vessel-level improvement actions for years. FCF wanted leverage the information they already had to better understand how to prioritize their investments on projects that address root causes and impact the fleet more broadly to accelerate improvements on social responsibility.

Research Question:

How should we invest in interventions at the vessel level to have the most impact? What actions would be most meaningful to workers?

SRA Application:

Audit results from a sample of vessels were mapped onto the SRA to evaluate fleet-wide risks against the SRA Risk Indicators. Where the audit protocol did not map to the SRA, onsite focus groups with crew were held to fill data gaps, but the main goal of these focus groups was to discuss potential action plan activities and understand improvements that would be a priority to crew, taking worker input into consideration when developing the action plan.

Outcome:

An action plan was developed that identified potential interventions at different levels, influenced by worker engagement: vessel-level and industry collaboration. Vessel-level actions were practical, spanning direct changes including Wi-Fi installation and new resources on vessels, onboarding/training materials, and changes to vessel owner management systems. These actions could be implemented fleet-wide and were suited for the level of the supply chain for the seafood supplier, taking into consideration limitations of their role, and highlighting potential leverage points along the way. Industry collaboration recommendations addressed root causes that fell out of the direct sphere of influence of any one company but are issues that are common in the sector. These are areas where FCF themselves may have not had sufficient leverage, but industry collaboration could have greater influence. Of these activities, one action was identified as an immediate priority, which inspired a [pilot](#) that was kicked off in the months to follow.

Testimonial:

"FCF was honored to work with LRQA on this Consortium project. With LRQA's support, we found that our existing vessel-level audit data could be translated to align with the SRA's core labor and working conditions indicators with relatively modest additional effort — primarily through stakeholder interviews and regulatory cross-checks. More importantly, the benchmarking process helped us look beyond individual vessel findings and systematically identify recurring issues, compare their relative significance, and better prioritize where further due diligence or intervention may be most useful across the fleet."

It's worth noting that several SRA principles, such as those covering community food security, livelihoods, and broader stakeholder governance, fall outside the scope of a vessel-level social audit by design, and would require a different type of data collection altogether.

The SRA can be particularly useful for understanding broader patterns and systemic risks across a fishery or fleet, so it would be valuable for market buyers seeking an overall picture of issues, or for policymakers developing policy referencing the SRA. In terms of day-to-day supply chain management, the conventional social audit is our tool of choice for ongoing vessel monitoring as part of our broader social programming."