

BRIDGING TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP APPROACHES TO DELIVER REAL IMPACT TO WORKERS

INSIGHTS FROM THE BARCELONA CONSORTIUM WORKSHOP, 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Across the workshop discussions, participants concluded that real impact for workers is only achieved when corporate human rights due diligence (HRDD) systems include access to remedy and meaningful engagement with workers as active participants in the HRDD process.
- Participants consistently recognised that while policies, assessments, and audits remain important tools, they deliver results only when they effectively involve workers and lead to worker-level change.

1. THE CONSORTIUM ON SOCIAL RISKS IN SEAFOOD

The Consortium on Social Risks in Seafood (comprised of LRQA, Conservation International, and FishWise), with Ocean Outcomes, brings together companies, experts and stakeholders to strengthen HRDD in complex supply chains, with a focus on practical implementation and real-world outcomes.

Consortium tools and approaches include:

- **HRDD guidance** – supporting companies as they move from risk identification to action and response, designed specifically for the seafood sector and guided by FishWise’s [Roadmap to Improve Seafood Ethics \(RISE\) platform](#). RISE helps companies in the ‘Embed’ stage of HRDD.
- **Assessing risks** – identifying salient risks and informing decision-making by leveraging the [Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector \(SRA\)](#). The SRA supports companies in the ‘Assess’ and ‘Act’ stages of HRDD.
- **Collaboration and engagement** – addressing shared challenges where no single actor can act alone and identifying / facilitating opportunities for collaborative action.

2. BRIDGING TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP APPROACHES: MOVING TOWARDS WORKER-DRIVEN HRDD

HRDD activities can involve both top-down and bottom-up approaches:

Top-down systems can include:

Internal policies · Supplier / Vessel Codes of Conduct · Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIAs) · Audits and assessments · Procurement tools · National and international policy advocacy

Bottom-up approaches can include:

Worker voice · Grievance mechanisms · Supporting robust local governance · Direct partnerships with local NGOs, frontline organizations, and worker representatives

The Consortium focuses on bridging top-down and bottom-up approaches to HRDD, supporting companies as they move from insight to action and conduct effective worker-driven HRDD processes.

A worker-driven approach:

- Focuses on whether actions change conditions for workers
- Prioritises voice, access to grievance, and protection of workers’ rights
- Uses corporate systems to enable response and follow-up, not just documentation

See Figure 1 for a visual representation of bridging top-down and bottom-up approaches.



Bridging top-down & bottom-up approaches is core to the HRDD process.

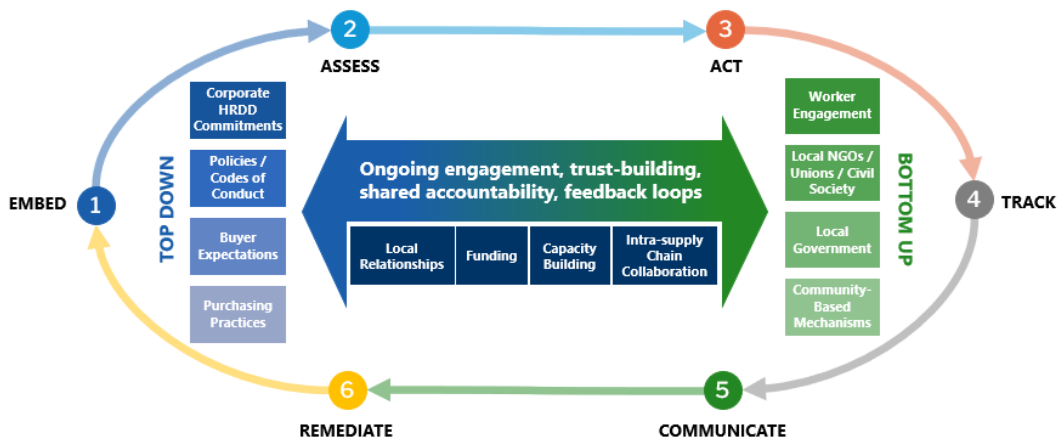


Figure 1: Bridging top-down and bottom-up approaches

3. WORKSHOP RESULTS: WHAT PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED AS THE “SWEET SPOT”

In the workshop, industry actors worked in small groups to identify the efficacy and worker impact of HRDD tools, with the aim of finding potential ‘sweet spots’ of effective HRDD tools that are economically practical to implement, effective in achieving company HRDD goals, and impactful for workers.

Sweet-spot actions include:

- Accessible grievance and remediation channels (e.g. hotlines, NGO-led, etc.) for Tier 1
- Worker training and awareness of rights
- Worker voice mechanisms (e.g. worker hotlines, worker organizations, worker committees)
- Wage transparency for Tier 1
- Direct engagement with suppliers, workers, unions, NGOs
- Wi-Fi access at sea, a fundamental enabler for worker engagement and accessing grievance channels

Challenging areas include:

- Accessible grievance and remediation channels for Tiers 2, 3
- Responsible recruitment
- Commercial leverage
- Building and scaling worker voice systems
- Regular, meaningful worker engagement (e.g., widespread Wi-Fi access, collaboration with worker organizations)
- Wage transparency for Tiers 2, 3
- Discussion not always leading to action and impact for workers

Company influence and responsibility:

- Companies often have strongest influence over systems and processes such as procurement, supplier engagement, and setting expectations.
- Many of the most important outcomes for workers (living wages, safety, and freedom of movement) require shared responsibility and collaboration.

CALL TO ACTION

Next steps for companies include:

1. Reflect on how these sweet-spot actions are currently applied in their supply chains.
2. Consider whether existing systems genuinely enable worker voice and response.
3. Engage with the Consortium to explore practical approaches to implementation, particularly in shared-responsibility areas.