



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



Indian Ocean Tuna Commission  
Commission des Thons de l'Océan Indien

iotc ctoi

IOTC Regional Observer Scheme

---

## Observer Program Development & Logistic Coordination Workshop

---

Training Observer Debriefers

### Debriefing Interview

- Plan, prepare and implement debriefing interview
- Use IOTC ROS standard debriefing templates

[IOTC ROS OLC TR 9.02]



CapMarine  
Capricorn Marine Environmental

## Debriefing

Debriefing is an essential part of the learning process for observers. It is during the debriefing session that the observers draw connections between lessons and activities which will increase the overall understanding of their responsibilities. Furthermore, it helps observers retain what they have learnt during training.

Debriefing gives the debriefer the opportunity to identify gaps in the observer's knowledge and source of errors in data collection and it allows them to provide effective (constructive and positive) feedback to observers to help them to understand where they stand in relation to expected and/or productive behaviour.

Debriefing also provides observers with a platform to provide feedback and clarify anything left unclear. Additionally, it helps to identify any psychological and emotional discomfort that has experienced during the observers' trip (case of harassment, family related problems etc.) and to propose solutions, where possible.

Debriefing assists Observer Programmes to build consistency at observer level and promotes work consistency in and among observer teams. Consistency helps to remove uncertainty within the observer's job responsibilities, helps build trust in their work, promotes team work and its linked to success.

The use of interview procedures, by debriefers, in the planning, preparation, and implementation of debriefing, the resort to classic and adapted interview techniques, and the employment of standard debriefing templates simplifies debriefing by homogenising the debriefing process and by standardizing observer trip documents revision, observer evaluation and feedback procedures.

As such standard debriefing interviews should be consistently conducted by Observer Programmes, in the debriefing of observers, in assessing observers' overall skills and in providing feedback both to observers and Observer Programme authorities.

### *Planning and preparing debriefing interview*

Following the collection, from the observer, of all observer data, electronic and hard-copies, draft trip report and notebooks, debriefers are to plan and prepare observer debriefing interview by:

- organizing with the observer a date, time and venue for the debriefing interview;
- suggesting or establishing a time limit to the debriefing interview prior or during debriefing. This will prevent the normal human trait of retaining the most significant bits of information for the end;
- familiarizing himself with documents that will serve as base for the debriefing interview by:
  - reading the observers draft Trip Report;
  - reading the observers notebook(s);
  - scanning visually all data sheets submitted to ensure that:
    - ✓ all paper forms delivered have been organized. If this has not been done all forms should be handed back to the observer to be organized;
    - ✓ the correct header details have been filled in on every form. If this has not been done all the forms should be handed back to the observer to be corrected and complete as required;
    - ✓ start of set date and times are consistent across all forms;
  - methodically checking each data field of the forms filled by the observer and crosscheck between fields and forms when and where required using debriefing template (if provided);

- highlights problem areas on documents revised (draft trip report, observer notebook, data collection forms, database, etc.) using debriefing template (if provided);
- cross-checking electronic data for errors and highflyers; and
- refresh itself concerning previous experiences with the observer to be debriefed (achievements, incidents, issues) to bring the mind into correct focus for the debriefing with a particular observer.

### ***Implementing debriefing interview***

The following procedures are to be applied by debriefers implementing observer debriefing interview.

- allow time for the observer to adjust to the interview environment, especially if it's his or her first experience of this kind. Part of this adaptation process includes familiarization with the surroundings and with the need for commonplace objects such as pencil and debriefing template that should be explained. Also, the manners and simple courtesies extended by the debriefer will contribute to diminish the observers' level of anxiety (e.g. asking about the observer's family, offering a tea or coffee and proposing to conduct the debriefing interview in neutral ground such as meeting room);
- ensure that those in attendance are free from distracting interruptions (phone calls, people knocking at the door, etc.);
- maintain a general tone of helpfulness and friendliness throughout the debriefing interview to minimize barriers to effective communication;
- guide the conversation using effective communication and listening techniques.
- develop information by formulating non-leading, open questions.
- avoid discussing trivial information. Sidestep as lightly as possible subjects that may bring about severe anxiety feelings to the observer. In addition, circumspection should be exercised at all times lest the debriefer becomes too emotionally involved in the exchange;
- avoid using a negative style of interrogation as it evokes anxiety.
- when silence follows a question, allow time for observers to answer (as they are attempting to formulate their own thoughts into a logical reply) and profitably spend your time pondering the question: "What is he really trying to tell me?";
- be aware of self-biases and attitudes as well as role perceptions and stereotyping that tend to impede if not prevent clear and relatively undistorted reception of information.
- take notes where and when required. Writing down items compliments the observer; it means that his responses are considered important enough to be recorded. The record will also assist with details which would be hard to remember if not recorded and will allow using the debriefing time to greater advantage for listening and thinking;
- use revised observed trip documents and previously filled debriefing templates (if any) to:
  - explore, through questioning, how to retrieve information for data fields left blank by the observer and remedy identified errors;
  - correct identified errors made by the observer where possible using established procedures;
- analyse the information collected objectively and subjectively
  - use the completed debriefing form (if any) to transfer the data quality check codes directly onto the evaluation form (if any); and/or

- process the completed paperwork appropriately in line with national and regional procedures and protocols.

### ***Assessing observer over-all skills***

Observer programs managers should be able to categorize the observers based on skills and competencies. With such information, they can organize trainings accordingly. The debriefing provides an ultimate opportunity to assess observer's over-all skill level.

Different methods can be used to assess observer skills and competencies. It is up to the debriefer to choose the best method(s). Normally, the combination of a few of these will achieve the best result. Depending on the skill to be tested and the conditions available (time, resources, etc.), the debriefer can use one or more of the methods listed below (or other) to assess observer's over-all skill level.

1. conducting tests or asking random general knowledge questions;
2. conducting self-assessment;
3. getting feed-back from vessels; and
4. using direct skill transfer.

#### **Random general knowledge questions and tests**

This is a traditional and efficient way to assess generic theoretical knowledge. However, such tests are generally conducted in "classroom" conditions and do not provide a reliable reflection of the observer's ability to apply the theoretical knowledge in a real-life situation.

To assess an observer's skills and competencies using this particular method, the debriefer should:

- ask random general knowledge questions to ascertain which theoretical competencies observer is lacking; and;
- conduct specific tests to identify systematic mistakes and correct data collected where possible.

#### **EXAMPLE**

By asking general knowledge questions, the debriefer can ascertain that the observer has difficulties to distinguish the different species of marlins. Therefore, he can ask the observer to conduct a species identification test on marlin species. If test results indicate that the observer systematically identifies black marlins as blue marlins, the debriefer can then replace all 'black marlin' entries for the specific observed trip by 'blue marlin' and recommend the Programme to sign the observer into a marlin species identification training course.

#### **Self-assessment**

Self-assessment is the type of assessment where individuals answer quizzes, surveys, forms, and other assessment materials to evaluate certain areas of their activities. Self-Assessment shows observer self-perception on their abilities and difficulties. This method should be used in combination with some other, more objective method.

#### **Vessel feedback**

This method is used to assess subjective skills such as observer conduct on-board and to help settling dispute problems that might arise between the observer and the vessel. There is some subjectivity in

what a vessel personnel will say, but it is for sure more objective rather than just relying on the opinion of the observer!

A way to get feedback from the vessel is to instruct observer to share, at the conclusion of the trip and prior to disembarking, a draft trip report summarising their work and events during the trip, with the Captain or Fishing Master for their comments. The vessel Captain or Fishing Master must be advised that these should be returned to the Programme controlling agency within a specific time period if the vessel or company has any comment or information to add.

Feedback can also be obtained via a direct discussion with Vessel Captain and/or Fishing Master or by requesting Vessel Captain or Fishing Master to answer a survey to evaluate certain areas of observers' activities.

### **Direct skill transfer**

The most efficient way to train and assess skills through direct transfer of skills. If and where possible newly recruited/trained observers can be deployed on the fishing vessel in the company of an experienced observer. The debriefing of both observers will allow to assess observers' skills and competencies.

### ***Providing effective feedback to observers***

*Debriefers should note that:*

- ❖ *Constructive feedback highlights the areas where the observer can improve his performance. Constructive feedback it's not criticism! It is descriptive and should always be directed to the action.*
- ❖ *Positive feedback involves telling the observer about good performance. Positive feedback, should be timely, specific, and frequent.*

*Debriefer should recognize that recognition of the good work of observers is a powerful motivator.*

To provide effective feedback to the observer during the debriefing interview, debriefers are to:

1. use revised documents and/or completed debriefing templates (if any) to provide comprehensive verbal feedback to the observer on their performance;
2. focus on an action or specific behaviour, not on the observers or their intentions;
3. describe actions or behaviour where the observer can improve;
4. provide a reaction to any action or specific behaviour as closely tied to the event as possible to enable the observer to easily connect it with his actions;
5. display interest in understanding any action or specific behaviour by asking the observer: What happened? How did that happen? Avoid asking "why" questions, as it can provoke defensiveness;
6. inform the observer of any actions or specific behaviour which is desired by the Programme. In addition, provide the observer with tools, training, time or support to achieve the suggested improvements. *E.g.: Say, "The report that you handed in yesterday was well-written, and understandable", instead of just saying, "good report"; or Say, "It's important that you are able to distinguish juvenile yellowfin from big-eye tuna, we are going to provide you with the support needed to improve", instead of just saying "I see you aren't able to distinguish juvenile yellowfin from big-eye tuna";*

7. check to make sure the observer understood what was communicated by asking a question or observing changed behaviour; and
8. be as consistent as possible. If an action is great today, it's also great tomorrow. If a violation merits disciplinary action, it should always merit it.

### ***Requesting effective feedback from observers***

Debriefers should request the observer to provide feedback on the Programme work protocols, methods and procedures. To request effective feedback from the observer during the debriefing interview, debriefers should:

- be polite and humble and let observers know their honesty is appreciated;
- clarify that the Programme is looking for feedback to improve rather than dwell on past mistakes;
- vary questions (avoid asking only very specific or overly vague questions);
- give observers time to respond;
- avoid being defensive;
- take notes; and
- thank observers for their help.

### ***Providing feedback on observer debriefing to Programme management structure***

#### **Feedback on observer performance and over-all skills**

Debriefers are to provide feedback to Observer Programme management structure (Coordinator, Coordination Team, etc.) on observer performance and over-all skills, for each trip, based on the objective and subjective analysis of observer debriefing interview and comparing with previous experiences with the observer debriefed (achievements, incidents, issues).

If using *IOTC ROS Standard Debriefing Templates*, the debriefer can use the gear specific *Observer Debriefing Form* to complete the gear specific *Observer Evaluation Form* and process the completed paperwork appropriately in line with national and regional procedures and protocols.

For further details on *IOTC ROS Standard Debriefing Templates* filling procedures and protocols, refer to Chapter 5 – Usage of IOTC ROS Debriefing Templates.

#### **Other required feedback**

The debriefer should check the observer data for indications of any issues concerning vessel incidents, non-compliance and/or infringements, that may need further investigation. If such issues are reflected in the observer data, the observer should be questioned about the reported incidents.

The debriefer must respond appropriately to apparent vessel infringements by forwarding a report to the surveillance personnel or the National Observer Manager as appropriate.

Debriefers should establish if the observer has followed the correct procedures, concerning vessel incidents, non-compliance and/or infringements and provide feedback to the observer as necessary.

### ***Use of Standard Debriefing Templates***

The use of standard debriefing templates simplifies debriefing by homogenising the debriefing process and by standardizing observer trip documents revision, observer evaluation and feedback procedures.

Debriefing templates and protocols developed for the IOTC ROS intend to cover the debriefing of observers using IOTC ROS standard data collection forms, following trips on longline, purse seine, pole and line, and gillnet fishing vessel.

Debriefers using templates and protocols developed for the IOTC ROS are to complete the debriefing template, specific to the fishing method of the vessel on which the observer has been deployed, using codes and following established procedures and protocols. Debriefers will use the completed templates to check with the observer errors identified in the observer data, to search for solutions for those errors, where possible, and to provide comprehensive feed back to the observer. Following observer debriefing interview debriefers are to use the score sheet corresponding to the debriefing template to complete associated observer data evaluation form, based on which they shall provide feedback and advise to Programme management team on observer general skills and competencies and on observer performance for the debriefed trip.