

DRAFT Guidelines for facilitating common policy positions and messages through the Civil Society Mechanism

These guidelines have been written to guide the on-going facilitation of policy discussions and positions through CSM Working Groups. However, they are also relevant and useful to guide discussions in working groups during the CFS Annual Forum in order to develop policy messages for the Plenary Sessions of the CFS.

The role of the CSM

The CSM is a facilitating, not a representational, body. It helps CSOs, particularly the organisations of the people most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition (peoples' organisations and social movements), to have their voices heard, and influence political outcomes of the CFS and at regional and national levels.

The CSM aims to promote collaboration, coordination and coherence between CSOs in the development and communication of common policy messages where possible and the range of different positions where there is no consensus.

The CSM does not itself take positions and it does not represent CSOs. There is no such thing as a CSM statement, position etc

The CSM helps to ensure that CSO policy positions are developed and communicated in accordance with the organising principles and ways of working agreed between CSOs during the establishment of the CSM - see the endorsed CSM document here:

<http://cso4cfs.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/csm-en.pdf>.

The CSM aims to ensure that the full range of CSOs from around the world are able to participate policy discussions within the CSM and to have their voices heard in the CFS, with particular priority being given to small scale food producers and other types of peoples' organisations and social movements. The organizations that represent those affected food insecurity and malnutrition should play a central role in the development and communication of policy positions.

The CSM is founded on the belief that the people most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition must be the agents of their own development, are best placed to represent their own interests and views and are not only victims but also bearers of solutions.

Functions of the CSM in relation to policy issues

The CSM plays this role by:

- Facilitating CSM policy working groups at the global level, in order to promote the sharing of experiences, analysis and positions and the development of common policy positions wherever possible, and divergent views where there is no consensus. CSOs are free to establish whatever policy working groups they wish. However, all efforts should be made to ensure participation from the full range of CSM constituencies and sub-regions, with particular priority given to the organisations of the people most affected.

- Supporting CSOs to influence policy processes and outcomes at the *global level* by facilitating civil society participation in CFS Plenary Sessions, Open Ended Working Groups, Task Teams, the CFS Advisory Group and other CFS mechanisms.
- The CSM seeks to enable CSOs to influence policy processes at *regional and national levels* by facilitating civil society participation in regional inter-governmental events and processes, e.g. FAO regional conferences, and facilitating participation in national, multi-stakeholder food security governance structures and processes.

The CSM Secretariat will do all that it can to support policy working groups and ensure that they function in accordance with CSM roles, principles and ways of working. However, the Secretariat is deliberately “lightweight” and the success of the CSM will depend upon the active participation of its members, resource people and particularly Coordination Committee members. In particular, NGOs are encouraged to play facilitation roles, by providing resources to enable the participation of peoples organisations and helping to facilitate the working groups in support of Coordination Committee members.

The role of CSM policy working groups

- To enhance circulation of relevant documentation and information on the issue and on the related process in the CFS
- To provide a space for dialogue and the exchange of views amongst CSOs on the issues under consideration by the CFS OEWG/TT
- To provide a space for CSOs to develop strong and well-articulated civil society positions
- To provide inputs to the civil society members of the CFS Advisory Group, Open Ended Working Groups (OEWGs) and Task Teams
- To identify civil society participants and spokespersons in CFS Plenary Sessions, OEWGs and Task Teams and in Round Table panels.

Participation in CSM working groups

The CSM working groups are open to ALL members of the Civil Society Mechanism. Membership of the CSM is open to all CSOs working on food security and nutrition. CSOs interested in participating in a CSM working group should contact the relevant CSM Coordination Committee member or facilitator (see CSM website). Members of the CSM WGs must be prepared to participate actively and not just be passive recipients of information!

In line with the organising principles of the CSM it is vital that representatives from peoples' organisations and social movements play a central role in the CSM working groups and are supported to play meaningful roles. This is a responsibility of the CSM Secretariat but it is also a responsibility of all CSOs, particularly NGOs, which have resources to assist.

If there is a risk that the voices of peoples' organisations and social movements are at risk of becoming crowded out by NGOs, particularly from the North, it may become necessary to apply the CSM quota system in order to ensure balanced and equitable participation in CSM working groups.

Coordination and facilitation of CSM working groups

Ideally each working group is coordinated by a member of the CSM Coordination Committee and supported by a facilitator who is dedicated to enabling broad civil society participation in the working groups, particularly by people from peoples' organisations and social movements. These facilitators are acting on a volunteer basis in liaison with the CSM Secretariat, and perform facilitation rather than political roles. The selection of the facilitator should be proposed by the members of the working group and agreed by the members of the CSM Coordination Committee

As much as possible the role of the CSM working group coordinators and facilitators, supported by the CSM Secretariat is to:

- Facilitate the participation of a wide range of CSOs in the CSM working groups, and in particular, encourage participation
- Share information on the CFS processes and content amongst all members of the CSM
- Facilitate civil society input into the CFS processes

The facilitators of CSM working groups need not necessarily be members of CFS OEWDs and TTs. It is not essential for facilitators to be based in Rome , since it is possible to be in contact with the secretariat via email and telephone.

Communication of policy positions

In communicating CSO policy positions to the CFS it should be emphasised that the positions with the greatest legitimacy are those which reflect the views of a diverse range of CSOs, especially peoples' organisations and social movements and have ensured input from CSOs at sub-regional and country levels.

Policy positions, messages, statements etc which are the outcome of a CSM facilitated process should:

- be clearly labelled as such in order that it is given the appropriate political weight by the recipients / targets of the statement
- clearly state in whose name a position is being communicated. It is not advisable to use wording that gives the impression that all CSOs within the CSM have been involved in the development of a statement or have endorsed it

In order to be clear in whose name a statement is being communicated, options include: (1) asking CSOs / networks to endorse a statement; (2) asking CSOs / networks to utilise a statement in their own advocacy; (3) clearly stating that the statement is the outcome of a process facilitated through the CSM in which named CSOs / networks have been involved

Where there is no consensus within a CSM policy working group, all efforts, in the time available, should be made to reach consensus. However, if consensus cannot be reached then divergent views should be acknowledged in the joint statement and divergent views should be communicated to the CFS

The selection of civil society participants in CFS OEWGs and Task Teams

The CSO participants in the OEWGs and TTs should have considerable experience in the issue and be able to communicate the different views within the CSM WGs. There can be rotation of spokespersons. The participants can vary according to availability, the specific issues under discussion at particular time etc. For inter-sessional activities of the CFS, participation does not have to be in person – for many CFS Task Team meetings it is possible to participate via tele-conference.

For each agenda item of the CFS Plenary Sessions (e.g. policy roundtable discussions), CSOs will have 5 spokespersons during the discussion (each intervention is a maximum of 3 minutes). Other civil society speakers can be called on by the Chairperson if time permits. As will all aspects of the CSM, priority should be given to people from peoples' organisations and social movements.