



Common Understanding of Facilitation in Principle and Practice

January 2020

Prepared by the CSM Facilitation Working Group

Introduction

'Facilitation' as a concept and practice is central to the work of the CSM.¹ However, despite this centrality, for the first nine years of the CSM's existence no common understanding of facilitation existed to inform and guide the activities of those taking up CSM facilitation roles. In 2018 two independent assessments² identified this gap as an obstacle to the strengthening and consolidation of CSM facilitation activities. In May 2019, as part of the CC response to these assessments, the newly formed CSM Facilitation Working Group was tasked with establishing an understanding of facilitation in principle and practice to inform the CSM's work. This document, produced via consultation and discussion in the Facilitation Working Group and with the wider CC, is the outcome of that process. It is a living document, to be revised, as required, moving forward.

Key Principles and Framework

- Facilitation is political.³ It seeks to transform power relations and overcome historical patterns of asymmetry, marginalisation and exclusion by privileging and supporting the participation and political protagonism of non-elite, rights-holding, affected constituencies committed to food sovereignty and agroecological approaches in the work of the CFS. It seeks to overcome barriers to participation that would otherwise prevent the effective and authentic participation of these actors, particularly the most vulnerable.
- Facilitation is an act of solidarity, between facilitators and those whose active and authentic participation they are seeking to support; and between facilitators and other facilitators.
- Facilitation requires a particular attitude, in which the facilitator (or even non-affected participant) subordinates their individual or organisational identity and agenda to prioritise the voice and protagonism of affected constituencies in the work of the CFS. It involves self-limitation, self-reflection

¹ For example, the CSM website states that the function of the CSM is 'to facilitate civil society participation and articulation into the policy processes of the CFS.' (CSM, 2019).

² Priscilla Claeys & Jessica Duncan (2018): Independent Evaluation of the Civil Society Mechanism. <http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/CSM-Evaluation-Report-2018-ilovepdf-compressed.pdf>; Brem-Wilson, J. (2018) 'Bridging the Gap? Facilitation in the Civil Society [and Indigenous Peoples'] Mechanism for Relations to the UN Committee on World Food Security: A discussion paper for the CSM'. http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/CSM_FacilitationDiscussionPaper_English_11.2.19.pdf

³ This is not to say however that all CSM organs have the same political significance. Political decision making in the CSM is shared among different bodies, particularly the Coordination Committee as the overall Steering Group, the CSM Working Groups and the CSM Advisory Group, within the limits of their respective mandates.

and self-critique and can be distinguished from more 'territorial' mindsets that seek to control and limit, rather than open and facilitate spaces and processes.

- Facilitation is a concept, an attitude, and a practice.
- Facilitation involves multiple roles and tasks, from sharing information to helping to create and manage the infrastructure of participation.⁴
- Facilitation seeks to articulate different *levels* (building mutually reinforcing linkages from the grassroots, national, regional and global, and back again); *sectors*; and *agendas* (linking the work of different CSM facilitation organs).
- The CSM seeks to provide global and subregional facilitation to support efforts to link the grassroots and global levels. It is therefore dependent on participating organisations to provide facilitation between the grassroots and subregional levels.
- Facilitation is not alone responsible for securing the effective and authentic participation of CSM constituencies in the work of the CFS. This responsibility is also shared with participating organisations, and the CFS itself.
- Facilitation seeks to ensure the care and safety of the collective space and process; of the individual actors participating within them; and of facilitators themselves.
- Facilitation is about communication and clarity and requires transparency. It is about a constant and dynamic bi-directional flow of information and practices.
- Facilitation builds trust, mutual accountability, and collective responsibility and participation. It aims at promoting and ensuring that protagonism is always collective, and never individual. It makes no one indispensable and everyone needed.
- Key facilitation organs in the CSM include the Coordination Committee (including relations among constituencies and sub-regions); Working Groups; the CSM Secretariat; and interpretation and translation.

⁴ For an example of roles being performed by facilitators in the CSM see Brem-Wilson, 2018, pp. 5-8.