Bridging the gap?
Facilitation in the Civil Society Mechanism for Relations to the UN Committee on World Food Security

A discussion paper for the CSM

21st September 2018

Acronyms
CC Coordination Committee
CFS Committee on World Food Security
CSM Civil Society Mechanism for Relations to the UN Committee on World Food Security
CSO Civil Society Organisation
FAO Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
VGGTs Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security
WG CSM Policy Working Groups

1. Introduction

This is a discussion paper on facilitation prepared for the Civil Society Mechanism for Relations to the UN Committee on World Food Security (hereafter CSM). The purpose of this document is not to provide an assessment of facilitation (see below and the section 'Recommendations' for some thoughts on this), but rather to help support internal reflection on the practice of facilitation in the CSM. This is in a context where a) there is something of a knowledge gap in the CSM regarding what facilitation is and how effective it is, and b) *collective*, *systematic* reflection on the role and contribution of facilitation to securing the participation of affected constituencies is largely absent. Drawing from data provided via interviews with CSM facilitators and observations of CSM facilitation practice (see Appendix 2. Methodology), it is hoped that this paper might support efforts to address both of those gaps by providing an initial overview of facilitation practice in the CSM (Section 2, pp. 2-8), identifying some potential facilitation challenges (Section 3, pp. 8 - 13), and offering some provisional recommendations for discussion (Section 4, pp. 13-14). This paper aims to complement the analysis of CSM practice provided by the 2018 CSM Evaluation, potentially responding to its call:

> [T]o consolidate good practices and training around facilitation [in the CSM].
> (Claeys and Duncan, 2018: 37).

This paper might also be useful to facilitators in other global policy bodies, as a reference of facilitation practice in the CSM. The CSM is at the cutting edge of attempts to include affected constituencies in

the work of a global policy body, and is therefore important as a site of emerging principles and practice for actors pursuing the same goal in other arenas.

CSM facilitation is an important topic for discussion. At its reform in 2009 the CFS recognised the formal right (claimed by affected constituencies themselves during the CFS's reform process) of 10 affected constituencies to participate in its work. This formal participation right is very important because such constituencies are typically excluded from global-level food and agricultural policy-making. This exclusion is exacerbated by the tendency of powerful countries to equate their national interests in this sphere with the interests of their corporations and 'high value' agricultural sectors. However, as was anticipated at the time, converting this formal right to participate into effective participation is not straightforward. Hence the CSM was established with the 'essential role' to facilitate the participation of CSOs in the work of the CFS (Action-aid, et al., 2010, para. 4). CSM facilitation, in other words, is an important topic for discussion because of the role that it seeks to play in enabling affected constituency participation in a domain (global level food and agricultural policy-making) from which they are normally excluded.

2. Facilitation Practice in the CSM – An Overview

As already stated, this paper does not offer a systematic assessment of facilitation in the CSM. Such an assessment would require data/information the collection of which was outside the scope of this project. That said, I believe it is possible to make a qualified assertion that *facilitation practices in the CSM have been a success*.[1] This is for the following reasons:

- Firstly, the continued engagement of affected constituencies within the CSM, and indeed an arguable *expansion* of their engagement;
- Secondly, the sense amongst such participants of having achieved 'victories' in CFS work, from landmark moments such as the negotiation of the VGGTs, to the recent adoption of an Agroecology workstream;
- Thirdly, the apparent absence of controversies or disputes in the CSM between facilitators and affected constituencies (notwithstanding some tensions around the role of CSM Secretariat under previous leadership);
- Fourthly, the fact that in an online survey conducted as part of the 2018 CSM Evaluation, in response to the question 'Were the views of social movements prioritised in [in the work of the CSM]?' over two thirds of participants answered positively, with the majority of the remainder saying they were unsure;
- And finally, the fact that in response to the question whether social movements who had participated in CSM working groups found working with NGOs (the main provider of facilitation support in CSM working groups) easy, or difficult, the vast majority of respondents' answers fell on the range easy-very easy. By language:

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[1] And this was broadly the view of the 2018 CSM Evaluation also.

- 100% of French-language responses fell within the range 'easy to very easy' (with 20% recording 'very easy').
- 100% of Spanish-language responses fell within the range 'easy to very easy' (with 75% recording 'very easy').
- 90% of English-language responses fell within the range 'easy to very easy' (with 20% recording 'very easy').

These indicators are confirmed by the view of a facilitator of one of the largest social movements participating in the CSM, that the CSM *does* accommodate the participatory preferences of affected constituencies. Although it was also reported that such actors are only able to attain the *minimum standard* of desired participation in the CFS, that they are required to make a big investment of time and energy to attain this, and that they continue to find the space very difficult.

a. Key Facilitation Organs

According to its founding document, the CSM aims to prioritise the participation of affected constituencies in the activities of the CFS (Action-Aid, IPC and Oxfam International, 2010). In the first instance, this commitment is visible in the CSM's *constituency* approach. This identifies 11 constituencies as participating actors in the CSM: Smallholder family farmers, artisanal fisherfolk, herders/pastoralists, landless, urban poor, agricultural and food workers, women, youth, consumers, Indigenous Peoples, and NGOs. The ratio of affected constituencies to NGOs is 10-1. Moreover, when NGOs do participate in the CSM, it is predominantly, though not exclusively, in a facilitation role. In a context – global governance - where civil society participation opportunities have been historically (and often are still) monopolized by NGOs, this illustrates that in the first instance, the CSM's facilitation agenda entails the facilitation of (political) *space*: opening and preserving space for affected constituencies in the work of the CFS.

Since its founding, the operationalization of this commitment to the participation of affected constituencies has resulted in ongoing clarification of the roles and responsibilities of different actors within the CSM. There are four principle organs of facilitation support in the CSM:

i. The CSM Secretariat.

According to the CSM's founding document, the Secretariat's role is to facilitate the functions of the CSM, including providing support to the Coordination Committee and intersessional support to the civil society members of the Advisory Group. Its role was anticipated to be 'administrative, facilitating the functioning of the CSM by performing financial, logistical and communication tasks.' It is envisaged within the CSM's founding document as political neutral, and would not expected to perform advocacy and lobbying roles. The CSM Secretariat was conceived as a crucial part of the facilitation infrastructure needed to provide the 'significant support' required by affected constituencies seeking

to participate effectively in the CFS (Action-Aid et al., 2010: paras. 13 & 35-38). The CSM Secretariat has three full-time members, but takes on additional staff to assist with preparation for the CSM Forum and CFS annual plenary.

ii. Working Group facilitators

The specific mechanism of technical facilitation of CSM working groups was not envisaged when the CSM was first established. The founding document did anticipate however the emergence of new principles and practices to support civil society participation in the year-round activities (Action-Aid et al., 2010: para. 7). The establishment of Policy Working Groups (WGs) – to facilitate civil society participation in specific CFS workstreams – became one such practice. Over time, it became an established principle of WG practice that the WG was facilitated by a Coordinator (a CC member), supported by one or more Technical Facilitators (e.g. an NGO or a movement staff-person). In this paper, WG facilitation refers however exclusively to the facilitation provided by the Technical Facilitators. Since the 2009 reform, the CSM has facilitated affected constituency participation in over 20 policy processes.

iii. Interpreters and Translators

The CSM works in three languages: Spanish, French and English. Interpreters and translators are therefore an indispensable part of the CSM's facilitation infrastructure. As well as facilitating internal CSM communication, they also enable affected constituency participation in official CFS meetings where interpretation is not provided (e.g. during the intersessional period), and during CSO Side Events.

iv. Coordination Committee Members

As conceived in the CSM's founding document, the Coordination Committee has something of a dual function: being responsible for CSM governance, and providing a point of articulation for its constituencies (facilitating their participation) with the CSM's work. The CC has 41 members, 24 from the CSM's constituencies, and a further 17 from its sub-regions. Time and access constraints meant it was only possible to gain a partial insight into the facilitation activities of members of the CC. However, it does appear that there is not yet a convergence of understanding and practice amongst CC members regarding the facilitation dimension of their role and responsibilities. This is evident in divergences describing the role and patchiness across regions in the development of infrastructure to support it. Given the development trajectory of the CSM, this is perhaps to be expected, particularly when tensions within previous CCs have perhaps impeded their ability to engage in this kind of clarification work.

b. CSM Facilitation Roles

By asking CSM facilitators to describe their work and activities it's possible to identify the following, 11 interrelated, facilitation roles being performed in the CSM:

i. Logistics

This includes such tasks as arranging travel for affected constituency participants in the CFS, including supporting visa and accommodation arrangements, distributing *per diems* and liaising with the CFS Secretariat to secure formal accreditation.

ii. Creating and improving the infrastructure of participation

This covers a range of activities that involve the creation and management of channels for affected constituency participation – via the CSM – in the CFS. Beginning perhaps with the creation of the CSM itself, it includes the coordination of CSM workstreams and processes (process-management), constituency renewal, outreach to affected constituencies (providing opportunities for their participation beyond pre-existing channels), the clarification of CSM procedures, the coordination of meetings with government representatives, and the preparation of case studies to channel affected constituency experience into the CFS workstreams.

iii. Informing

This role involves the dissemination of CFS- and CSM-related information, from updates on CFS workstreams, to registration announcements, to information about the CFS annual plenary, and more. Examples include CSM updates, the CSM Annual Report, emails from CC members to their constituencies and regions. It also includes attempts to orient civil society participants to the space (the CSM and the CFS), and its complexity. Informing has an external (towards wider publics and non-participants) and internal (towards participating organisations) orientation.

iv. Translating

'Translation' is a central motif used by facilitators to describe their work. This captures the reality that affected constituencies and UN policy-making occupy different worlds, and effective articulation of these two worlds requires a third party (facilitators) to mediate, or 'translate' between them. 'Translation' work involves the framing, by facilitators, of CFS work, to make its relevance more

intelligible to affected constituencies. It requires 'translating' the political priorities of affected constituencies into technical inputs ('negotiation tools') for CFS policy processes. And, of fundamental importance, it also involves translation (and interpretation) - understood in the more conventional sense - within the CSM's three working languages (Spanish, French and English) to enable communication between, and to, participants in the CSM, and to enable affected constituency participation in CFS meetings when official interpretation is not provided. 'Translation' also contains an information processing element, filtering email and other communication streams to extract only the content of relevance to social movements and reformatting it for them.

v. Guiding

This is complementary to translation, and captures the role that facilitators play in providing strategic and tactical advice to affected constituencies, to enable them to exercise their political protagonism in CFS work. This could include providing information about the political profile of country delegates (where they stand on different issues), the political context behind a CFS policy-process, and the range of negotiation positions that might be available. It also includes advice on 'tone' – that is, the style of speech that is most likely to gain traction with government delegates and UN officials in the CFS.

vi. Defining common positions

This is part of process-management. It captures the explicit attempts by facilitators to build and define common positions amongst the affected constituencies participating in the CSM's work. Sometimes this has a conflict resolution or management dimension, involving the management of potential conflicts between the different sectors and movements that participate in the CFS. This was often recognised as a key component of CSM facilitation, pursued via attempts to create transparent, even-handed processes (via, for instance, equitable distribution of information and participation opportunities). Given that affected constituency participants in the CSM come from positions of political marginality, and therefore have a special sensitivity to issues of power and voice, this dimension of facilitation work is crucial. It is credited with shifting political tensions within the CSM, taking it forward from a period of overt conflict between different groups to one in which a more collaborative or respectful tone prevails.

vii. Animating

This role captures the fact that facilitation has a key *relational* dimension. That is, it involves a relationship between the facilitator and the affected constituency participant. With an attitude of enthusiasm towards the affected constituency participant and the space in which they participate, the

facilitator can animate their participation. This was expressed sometimes as the desire to create an opportunity for the affected constituency participant to 'bring their best' to the process. Conversely, if the facilitator is cynical about the space, or has misgivings about the participant, this can dampen their participation. Given the relatively small numbers of people and organisations providing facilitation in the CFS, and the political trajectory of the CFS in 9 years since its reform, such facilitation burn out is a very real possibility.

viii. Accompanying or being in solidarity

Again, this captures the relational dimension of facilitation. The CFS is an elite space populated by government delegates, UN officials, and increasingly, representatives of corporate interests in the agrifood sector. For many affected constituencies, therefore it can be a difficult, and sometimes intimidating space. Facilitators recognise this, as communicated in their desire to be a 'friend in the space', a source of solidarity and accompaniment.

ix. Mobilising resources

Facilitators explicitly attempt to mobilise resources to enable affected constituency participation in the CSM. This includes ongoing efforts to maintain the operational costs of the CSM, as well as efforts (e.g. by Working Group facilitators) to mobilise resources for specific working groups.

x. Advocating/Lobbying

Facilitators attempt to bridge the gap between affected constituencies and the CFS. One of the ways they do this is by outreaching to government delegates and UN officials to provide information about, or promote or seek support for CSM positions.

xi. Gap Filling

Facilitators also identify themselves as filling gaps in CSM positions and activity. This has two dimensions. On the one hand, they attempt to direct attention in CSM discussions to issues that may have been overlooked, and in their view, deserve attention. On the other, in CFS processes they defend positions that in their view are in the interests of affected constituencies, but which the affected constituencies themselves might not in that moment have the capacity to defend for themselves.

xii. Assessment

The CSM Evaluation 2018 also identified a further (12th) role performed by facilitators - *assessing*: 'The [CSM] Secretariat assesses who needs to be involved in specific processes and decisions. They do this in consultation with the Coordination Committee and in line with the CSM Founding Document.' (Claeys and Duncan, 2018: 27).

Applying these roles to the different facilitation organs in the CSM, we can say that:
- The CSM Sec does all of them;
- WG Facilitators do most;
- There is uncertainty regarding what CC members do. However, with regards to CC practice, it is important to be mindful of the CSM Evaluation finding, that in practice most consultation and constituency outreach takes place in the context of CSM Working Groups. Given the capacity constraints of affected constituencies and facilitators, and the concrete political salience of WGs, it would seem logical that these would be the main place for the consultation effort.

3. Facilitation Challenges

a. Articulating different levels

Facilitation in the CSM – particularly in Working Groups – involves the attempt to couple the technical capacity of the facilitators, with the political protagonism of affected constituencies. It also involves the articulation of three semi-autonomous processes or levels.

The first level is that of the autonomously organised affected constituencies and their movements. This level is where movement-building within a constituency differentiated along lines of gender, region, age, experience, roles, and more, takes place. A single movement may encompass many different cultures, and the successful negotiation of these differences requires the development of a distinctive participatory culture. This embodies sensitivities that are often absent, or cannot be accommodated, at the upper levels.

The second level is that of the CSM. This is a place of collaboration *between* different sectors, with potentially diverging agendas, interests and identities. The CSM is challenged therefore to negotiate these divergences in the pursuit of common positions, whilst at the same time channelling inputs into CFS workstreams.

And the final level is that of the CFS itself. This is the formal level, the level of political decision-making, at which intergovernmental/UN ways of working prevail.

The interaction between these different levels brings different participatory cultures into contact with each other. For affected constituencies (and also some NGO Southern Hemisphere participants in

the CSM) this challenges them to have to adjust to a participatory culture different to their own. The differences between these participatory cultures (and the facilitation styles that are associated with them) is somewhat crudely represented in Table 1. below. This table is intended only to represent general tendencies. For example, it is not the case that NGOs can't and don't practice people-centred, flexible facilitation, nor that social movements aren't concerned with generating meeting outcomes. Rather it is designed to pull out some general tendencies within and differences between the participatory cultures, and the actors often associated with them, that encounter each other in the CSM. Doing so highlights some key challenges. These include the challenge faced by some actors having to adjust to the participatory culture of the CFS; the challenges faced by facilitators seeking to balance process and outcome, or in creating ways of working that accommodate affected constituency preferences in a context heavily conditioned by the participatory culture of the CFS.

PARTICIPATORY CULTURE (facilitation style)	Process-Oriented	Outcome-Oriented
Actors	Social Movements/ Affected constituencies/ Southern NGOs	Policy professionals/ NGOs
Regions	Southern Hemisphere	Northern Hemisphere/ Europe
Degree of Flexibility	Flexible • Agenda, and meeting outcomes determined on the day • Flexible time-keeping	Rigid • Agenda fixed in advance • Desired outcomes pre-identified • Strict time-keeping
Process-outcome weighting	PROCESS-outcome	process-OUTCOME
Pace	Slow	As dictated by the agenda
Information provision	Minimal	'As required'
Participant Management	Accommodating participants' desire to speak to the extent that meeting outcomes are compromised	As dictated by the formula: Meeting Duration ÷ Agenda = Allocated speaking time
Values (in order of priority)	1. Participant agency 2. Relationship building (creating trust and mutual understanding) 3. Outputs (for external processes)	1. Outputs (for external processes) 2. Participant agency 3. Relationship Building (creating trust and mutual understanding)

Process	Multiple, simultaneous, ongoing interacting processes (e.g. clarification of political positions *and* simultaneous development of technical proposals *and* political negotiation)	Single, linear (e.g. preparation followed by development of technical proposals followed by political negotiation)

Table 1 – Schematic Representation of Two Facilitation Cultures

b. Ongoing and emergent challenges

As already noted, for the reasons cited above we can conclude that facilitation practice in the CSM has been largely successful. That said, along with those already identified, it is possible to identify some ongoing or potentially emergent facilitation challenges.

i. The absence of a definition of facilitation in the CSM

In the CSM there is no recognised or 'official' definition of facilitation. However, as expressed in its founding documents, the documents that clarify CSM principles and practice, and in the attitudes, expectations and practices of CSM facilitators, there is recognisably a 'CSM way'. This speaks to an apparent convergence amongst CSM facilitators (and affected constituency participants) on some key principles that define their roles and interactions. These would include, for example, the primacy of affected constituency as participants in the CSM, with NGOs – largely - playing facilitation roles. However, the lack of an agreed definition of the meaning of facilitation can be identified as a challenge, because in the absence of such a definition it is difficult or impossible for the CSM to reflexively examine its own facilitation principles and practices, or even expect a convergence around those principles and practices by all those occupying CSM facilitation roles.

ii. The absence of collective, systematic reflection on facilitation practice

It is inaccurate to say that CSM facilitators are not engaged in deep reflection on their role and positionality in the CSM, nor that there hasn't been increased understanding and improvement of facilitation processes and practices in the CSM. However, what can be said with certainty is that this reflection is often localised (i.e. contained within particular facilitation organs such as the Secretariat), episodic, and perhaps – in the absence of a definition of facilitation to guide reflections – not as systematic as it could be. Working at multiple scales, geographically dispersed, extended across

multiple processes, CSM facilitators are challenged therefore to reflexively examine their facilitation practice in a way that is more collective, and systematic.

iii. Effective vs. authentic participation

This challenge refers to the conundrum that facilitators sometimes face between promoting affected constituency interests, on the one hand, and accommodating their agency, on the other. For example, though WG facilitators generally professed a desire to avoid protagonism in CFS meetings, there were instances when – due to shortfalls in affected constituency capacity – they would step in, or advocate stepping in, to ensure that affected constituency interests were not overlooked in CFS policy processes. In a context where the coupling of the technical capacity of facilitators with the political steering of affected constituencies is a widely accepted principle in the CSM, this is not necessarily controversial. More controversial perhaps is that affected constituencies are sometimes discouraged by facilitators from adopting contentious positions or language, in order to accommodate the norms of the arena. There is evidence to indicate that affected constituencies find this uncomfortable, though it is unclear how wide or significant an issue this is.

iv. Information management

Facilitators must provide affected constituency participants with sufficient quantities of information to enable their effective participation, but not so much that they make them feel inadequate (by overloading them with technical details) and deter their participation. This is particularly a challenge for Working Group facilitators, and there seemed to be different approaches to dealing with it. Some facilitators kept their communications to a minimum, providing brief contextualisation and presenting a small number of proposals for affected constituencies to decide upon. Others sought to provide thicker contextualisation, aiming for affected constituencies to generate their own proposals.

v. The cost of facilitation

The provision of facilitation comes at a cost. For social movements of affected constituencies it is having to find ways of working with other sectors, or movements, with whom they may have ongoing conflicts or tensions. For members of the CSM Secretariat (due to the ambiguous legal status of the CSM and its existence outside of national legal and financial frameworks) it means having to accept a compromised financial standing (access to credit, mortgages, etc). For NGOs it means having to accept a diminished profile for their work. Each of those providing facilitation are challenged, in different ways, by that provision.

vi. The challenge of assessing facilitation

It is not easy to assess facilitation. This requires engaging affected constituencies in facilitated reflection on their experiences participating in the CSM. Such affected constituencies, however, are difficult to access. They are time-constrained, geographically dispersed (and often remote), and often enjoy irregular and unstable access to electronic communication channels. Assessment of facilitation is essential to identify persistent barriers to participation and develop strategies and responses to overcome them. Developing methodologies for assessing affected constituency participation that accommodate the profiles of affected constituencies, whilst enabling the capture of data at sufficient depth and detail, is a key challenge for the CSM.

vii. The challenge of recruiting (Working Group) facilitators

As noted by the 2018 CSM Evaluation, presently the pool of facilitators in the CSM is relatively small. Indeed, the bulk of the CSM's facilitation of affected constituencies' participation in CFS workstreams has been carried out by a small group of highly dedicated, and highly component individuals. Given their unique profile, it is reasonable to anticipate that expanding this pool is not going to be easy or straightforward. Required traits include:
- The need to be trusted by affected constituencies, and their movements (sometimes this has to be rebuilt with each new individual participant to the CSM);
- The need to understand the (very complex) space (CSM>CFS>FAO>…), and the actors, mechanisms and processes therein;
- The need to understand their role, and accept its limitations:
    - Facilitation, not protagonism
    - Requires reflexive self-limitation
    - Acceptance of facilitation costs;
- The need to have organisational mandates for their work;
- The need to understand the *profile* of affected constituency participants in the CSM:
    - Engaged in political struggles
    - From distinctive and divergent (from each other, and from policy-professionals) participatory cultures
    - Face specific participation constraints (lack of time, capacity, irregular internet access)
- The need to understand the issues (land, water, seeds, agroecology, right to food, food sovereignty, etc);
- The need to have capacity:
    - Time
    - Communication and language competence (Ideally 2 or even all 3 of the CSM languages).

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Facilitators contributing to the CSM have acquired these traits over many years, and via a diverse range of developmental trajectories. Given this range of these required traits, facilitator recruitment has to proceed very cautiously.

viii. Maintaining Facilitator Morale

As noted above, presently the team of facilitators in the CSM is quite small. Many have been active in the CSM for many policy processes, and therefore have strong views about the general 'health' of the CFS, and its participants. Reflecting the relatively difficult period that the CFS has experienced over the past 2-3 years, some facilitators have become cynical regarding the state of the contemporary CFS. The extent to which this influences their facilitation remains unknown, but given the role of facilitators as 'animators' of affected constituency participation, this perhaps should be monitored, most probably reflexively, by facilitators themselves. And as the 2018 CSM Evaluation captured, facilitators do find themselves isolated sometimes in the performance of their role. Facilitators, in other words, are human beings, and their health and wellbeing needs to be looked after.

4. Recommendations

In light of the above, and to further discussion on CSM facilitation practice, the following provisional recommendations are offered.

i. Systematise the collection of data on affected constituency participation in the CSM

As noted, in the absence of reliable data on affected constituency participation it is very difficult to accurately and comprehensively assess the effectiveness of facilitation interventions in the CSM.

ii. Expand processes of collective reflection amongst CSM facilitators

As stated above, this paper aims to support internal reflection on the practice of facilitation in the CSM by providing a reference for discussion. To exploit its full potential, discussion on facilitation should be located in an ongoing cycle of reflection on facilitation practice (IDS, 2018). This could involve several different stages, including: a) the provision of facilitation; b) assessment of that facilitation; c) collective reflection on that assessment; and d) the modification or consolidation of facilitation practice (see Diagramme 1, below). This process should involve collective reflection for at least four reasons.

Firstly, because it would facilitate knowledge and practice exchange amongst facilitators. In the CSM there does seem to be a convergence of facilitation thinking and practice (at least within the

Secretariat and amongst WG facilitators – what is happening in the CC is less clear). However, there are differences between facilitators in the weighting they attach to different aspects of facilitation, and/or in conceptualisations of the role. This means there's an untapped potential for knowledge and practice exchange between facilitators that collective reflection could help address.

Secondly, and relatedly, collective reflection would help individual facilitators identify and overcome ongoing and emerging facilitation challenges by drawing from collective experience and knowledge.

Thirdly, because facilitation is difficult, and collectivising its provision could help strengthen facilitator solidarity and support.
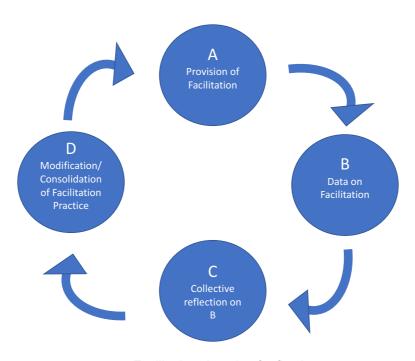
And finally, collective reflection is necessary to formulate responses to barriers to participation at a strategic level. Facilitation is just one of the three available routes to overcome barriers to participation. The other two are, a) actor adjustments (i.e. modifying the participant's capacity), and b) arena adjustments (changing the properties of the arena) (see Appendix 1 below). When barriers to participation are identified, ideally, facilitators (in conjunction with affected constituency participants) would co-decide which of the three routes to take to address them, and in the case of route b (arena adjustments) take the lead in advocating for this. Strategically, it should probably be a standing objective of the CSM to advocate for arena adjustments in the CFS, to minimise as far as is possible the burden that must be carried by civil society in securing affecting constituency participation therein.

At present, as already noted, such a cycle of collective reflection is absent in the CSM. That said, following the reporting of the 2018 CSM Evaluation, the CSM is presently in a reflective moment. This paper has aimed to take advantage of that, complementing the wider gaze of the CSM Evaluation with a narrower and deeper focus on the specific issue of facilitation.

Facilitation: A cycle of reflection

Diagramme 1. Facilitation – A Cycle of Reflection

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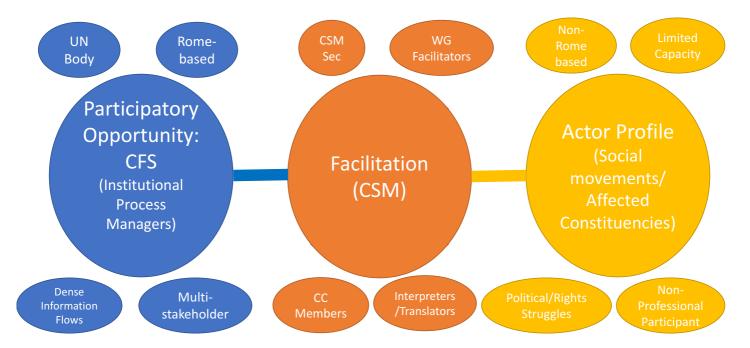http://www.csm4cfs.org/the-csm/

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Appendix 1. Situating facilitation in the dynamics of participation

Three possible routes to overcoming Barriers to Participation: Facilitation, Adjustment of the Participatory Opportunity; and Adjustment of the Actor.

Appendix 2. Methodology

This paper is based primarily on interviews with CSM facilitators and observation of facilitation practice conducted between October 2017-September 2018. In total 20 in-depth interviews (between one to three and a half hrs long) were conducted. The breakdown of interviewees (with some interviewees having performed multiple CSM facilitation roles) included:

- The 3 full-time members of the CSM Secretariat;
- 1 ex-member of the CSM Secretariat;
- 6 CC members;
- 10 Working Group facilitators (covering the full history of CSM WGs from VGGTs to Forestry, though not every WG);
- 2 CSM-participating social movement facilitators;
- 1 facilitator of an international civil society network that articulates with the CFS.

The paper additionally draws from:
- The author's ongoing observations of affected constituency participation in CFS/CSM meetings between 2009 and 2017;
- Interviews with affected constituency participants on their participation in CFS processes;
- The findings of the 2018 CSM evaluation (Claeys and Duncan, 2018).

The definition of facilitation that guided the data collection was 'Support provided to enable the effective and meaningful participation of affected constituencies in transnational policy processes.'[2]

It is important to note some limitations of the research methodology. Firstly, the analysis presented here was developed in the absence of – in the author's view – data providing an accurate picture of the quality of participation being attained by affected constituencies in the CFS. Such data is absolutely essential to be able to accurately assess facilitation practices in the CSM, and would include both information about the quality of participation they are able to attain, and the contribution of facilitation in enabling that. Although we can infer that affected constituencies are able to participate substantively in the CFS (see CSM Evaluation, 2018; and above), the absence of this data means that we can only make a qualified assessment of facilitation practice, and can't systematically identify persistent and significant barriers to participation.

Secondly, and relatedly, the picture of facilitation that emerges here is constructed largely via the perceptions of those providing it. These observations have not been triangulated against either the actual experiences of affected constituencies, nor, though of less importance, observations of facilitation practice as it is applied, for example in CSM Working Groups.

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[2] See Brem-Wilson, 2017, for a fuller discussion of facilitation in the CSM, and its context.

And finally, as already noted, this paper draws from only a small number of interviews with past and present CC members, meaning that its findings are biased more towards the experiences of facilitators in other parts of the CSM.