

Recommendations from Oxfam and IPC on the role and ways of working of the ad interim civil society participants in the CFS Advisory Group

Introduction

Oxfam and IPC are working with other organisations to develop a proposal for an on-going Civil Society Mechanism which can facilitate CSO/NGO participation in the CFS and provide a fair way of selecting civil society participants in its activities.

As requested by the Chair of the CFS there is a need to select 4 civil society participants on an ad interim basis until the mechanism is established by the CFS Plenary in mid October 2010.

What is fundamental for us, is that whoever the 4 civil participants are, they do everything possible to **ensure that the full range of civil society organisations, networks, regions, constituencies and sectors¹ are able to participate** in the work of the Advisory Group. We also think it is essential that **priority is given to ensuring that the voices of smallholder producers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, indigenous, urban poor, migrants, agricultural workers and other organisations of people most affected by violations of the right to food**. Their voices should not be crowded out by organisations and networks with the resources to more easily participate and influence.

Role of civil society members of the Advisory Group

- to facilitate the participation of, and represent where possible, a constituency or constituencies composed of organizations/networks
- to represent any common positions that constituency members may have developed and the range of views and positions of constituency members when there is a lack of consensus – not only the position of their own organization, network etc.
- to facilitate the direct participation of constituency members wherever possible
- to share information on the work of the CFS and the Advisory Group as widely as possible
- to facilitate two-way information and communication between the Bureau, other members of the Advisory Group and members of civil society (e.g. by organizing physical or virtual meetings of constituency members prior to Advisory Group meetings)
- to coordinate amongst themselves and work together to ensure that as wide a range of civil society organizations as possible are able to feed into the work of the Advisory Group
- to collectively report on an annual basis to the broader civil society group

Notes:

- We see the civil society members of the Advisory Group as “focal points” for civil society as a whole rather than only representatives of their own organizations or networks
- They should do everything possible to ensure that the broadest range of views of civil society from all regions, constituencies, organizations, networks and sectors, have the opportunity to follow and feed into the work of the Advisory Group.
- Focal points should not necessarily participate themselves in all the activities of the Advisory Group – nobody has the expertise to advise on all issues that are likely to be addressed by the Advisory Group.

¹ Please see CFS reform document for a list of the constituencies
<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/017/k6023e4.pdf>

- They should consult widely with civil society networks to identify the relevant organizations, networks and individuals that are best able to participate in the tasks assigned to the Advisory Group and its “task teams”.
- “Task teams” among civil society organisation could be established to prepare and assist in the tasks by allowing an optimal participation of relevant organisations.
- In case of unavailability or where someone else has the relevant expertise, the focal point could be replaced by another person from the same constituency (not necessarily same organisation/network) which has been previously communicated

Selection of civil society focal points

We think it will be necessary to **select focal points from a range of different types of organisations, networks and constituencies** in order to maximise the likelihood that the widest possible range of civil society is able to participate.

We think that **one seat for INGOs should be sufficient** as priority should be given to organisations and networks of people from developing countries. INGOs should have the resources and capacity to ensure good coordination amongst ourselves. The INGO focal point would be representing and facilitating the involvement of all relevant INGOs. Therefore, it would be necessary to establish some kind of global INGO network on food security and nutrition (with a global INGO Coordination Committee) which will bring together existing regional and national networks & alliances of INGOs. The purpose of such a network would be to ensure inclusive participation of INGOs in the CFS Advisory Group and critically to ensure that we are supporting rather than undermining the participation of civil society organisations from developing countries. INGOs should consider how they can financially enable participation of organisations from the other categories and the establishment and functioning of the on-going civil society mechanism.

We think that at least for the interim period, until the Mechanism is established, **the civil society focal points should have been active members of the CFS Contact Group**, as it is essential that the focal points are familiar with the CFS and its reform process and are able to work effectively and efficiently from day 1.

We think that individual focal points should be selected according to their ability to perform the role and work in the ways described above. **Selection criteria** should include:

- Ability to participate regularly in AG meetings in person or via telecon and video conferencing facilities
- Demonstrable commitment to the principles of inclusiveness and prioritizing input from those most affected by hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity
- Ability to network with and ensure the participation of a broad range of constituencies, organizations, networks, regions and sectors
- Communication and networking skills
- Commitment to report on their participation at the AG to the broader civil society

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