



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

FAO's WORK ON HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION 32/31 ON CIVIL SOCIETY SPACE

Rome, April 2017



INDEX

BACKGROUND.....	3
RULES AND PRACTICES FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF CSOs AT FAO MEETINGS.....	4
STRATEGY FOR PARTNERSHIPS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS.....	5
HOW THE WORK IS SUPPORTED WITH CSOs?.....	7
SUCCESS STORIES WORKING WITH CSOs	8



A. BACKGROUND.

1. Achieving food security for all is the heart of FAO's efforts making sure people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active and healthy lives. FAO's mandate is to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy.
2. FAO's new Strategic Framework identifies a set of five new cross-cutting strategic objectives, closely aligned with the most relevant and urgent development issues faced by member countries and the development community:
 - a) Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.
 - b) Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner.
 - c) Reduce rural poverty.
 - d) Enable more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems at local, national and international levels.
 - e) Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.
3. FAO was one of the first UN agencies to recognize that fulfilment of this purpose would require the involvement of society at large. The Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FFHC) was established in 1959 as a means to this end¹. Over time, technical units and offices throughout FAO built up their relations with NGOs, both in the field and through global dialogue and information sharing. These efforts gave very positive results, and pointed out the need of innovative and appropriate operational procedures for exchanging and lessons learned.
4. Since the 1980s, CSOs have grown progressively in size, scope, number and geographical distribution. Step by step, they have acquired major national and international impact to engage with international organizations, FAO included.
5. The United Nations summits of the 1990s – including the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992 and the Rome World Food Summit in 1996 – were instrumental in paving the way for the large-scale participation of CSOs, raising their influence in global governance to unprecedented levels².
6. Thousands of representatives from civil society and NGOs attended The World Food Summits in 1974, 1996, 2002, 2009, the High-Level Conference on Climate Change and Food Security in 2008, and the International Conference of Nutrition (ICN-2) in 2014.
7. This document contains detailed information of FAO's work with CSOs including procedures practices, and examples of global collaboration, as requested by Human Right Council Resolution 32/31 (June, 2016).

¹ FAO 1999. FAO Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/X2214E/X2214E00.htm>).

² FAO 2011. FAO in the 21st century (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2307e/i2307e.pdf>).



B. FAO RULES and PRACTICES for the PARTICIPATION of CSOs at MEETINGS.

8. The general legal framework concerning participation of CSOs in meetings and activities of the Organization approved for The FAO Conference in 1957 is set forth in the FAO Basic Texts: Part M “FAO Policy concerning Relations with International Non-Governmental Organizations”; Part N “Granting of Observer Status (in Respect of International Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations)”, and the Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations, approved by the Council at its 146th Session in April 2013.
9. The Basic Texts provide that formal relations with an International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) may take one of three forms according to the importance of its field of activity in relation to FAO activities and the level of cooperation envisaged: *consultative status, specialized consultative status and liaison status*.
10. Each status reflects a different level of involvement; however, there is a common set of prerequisites, which must be satisfied regardless of status which is eventually granted. These prerequisites may be summarised as follows: (i) that the organization be international in structure and scope of activity; representative in its field of interest; and (ii) have a permanent directing body, authorized representatives and systematic procedures. In addition, the INGO’s aims and activities must be consistent with FAO’s mandate and Constitution³.
11. Upon request by the interested INGO, consultative status is granted by the Conference, on the proposal of the Council or by the Council during inter-sessional periods, whereas specialized consultative status and liaison status are granted by the Director-General. Formal status granted by FAO to an INGO is kept under review and may be terminated or maintained, as appropriate.
12. As per Basic Texts, the participation in Conference and Council sessions of INGOs depends on the level of formal relations. Depending on the formal relations, INGOs may send an observer, accompanied by advisers and assistants to attend: the plenary meetings of the Conference and of any commission, technical committees of a commission, and technical committees established under Rule XV [GRO]. Such observers may, without vote, speak to such commissions and committees, participate in the discussions therein upon the request of the Chairperson and, with the consent of the General Committee, speak at plenary meetings of the Conference. They may circulate, without abridgement, the views of the organizations which they represent at the Conference
13. Furthermore, INGOs devoid of formal relations with FAO may participate in specific FAO meetings, upon ad hoc invitation by the Director-General. In practice, participation of observers in FAO technical meetings has not been limited to INGOs with formal status with FAO, but there has been a growing tendency for representatives from CSOs to attend FAO meetings at times under special ad hoc arrangements. Such CSOs can participate in meetings subject to endorsement by the relevant technical division, in consultation with the Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development Division (OPC).

³ Idem.



14. Some governing and statutory bodies have developed procedures to involve CSOs in their meetings and activities. The scheme of participation of CSOs in Regional Conferences (RC) meetings are set out in the Guidelines for Civil Society Participation in FAO Regional Conferences. A minimum of three spokespersons may represent CSOs both at the senior officers and the ministerial segments of the concerned RC. The selection of the spokespersons, as well as the consolidation of CSOs' position in RC meetings, takes place in a Civil Society Consultation, organized by the CSOs prior, or in parallel with the RCs' session⁴.
15. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in 2009 underwent a process of reform and set up a sui generis regime. The enhanced involvement of CSOs and the private sector in CFS work and activities has been one of its major outputs. They can participate in sessions of the Committee either as participants or observers; however, whereas participants can take the floor in debates "without having to wait until Members have intervened", observers can intervene in the Plenary only upon invitation by the Chairperson. Only CFS Members have decision-making authority⁵.
16. The new CFS legal framework has recognized the possibility for Non State Actors to autonomously establish a global mechanism for food security and nutrition operating as a facility for consultation and participation in the CFS. As a result, CSOs/NGOs participants have created a Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) to which a predetermined amount of seats in the CFS sessions is allocated.

C. STRATEGY for PARTNERSHIPS with CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS.

17. Over the decades, CSOs have come to recognize FAO for the catalytic role it has played in stewarding the policy outcomes of all the summits into concrete processes, mechanisms and programmes that are now embedded within FAO's activities. They have increasingly come to view FAO as a trusted, neutral broker in the field of food and agriculture.
18. FAO's ability to combine technical expertise with policy application has facilitated the establishment of partnerships between governments and civil society. FAO provides technical assistance in implementing global conventions, regulatory frameworks and voluntary guidelines and, in turn, giving CSOs and NGOs access to technical data, information and knowledge, enabling them to build good working relationships at field level to produce their own information⁶.
19. During the mandate of the current Director-General, Jose Graziano da Silva, FAO has continued the interaction with civil society, an effective tool for both making and implementing policies. CSOs, NGOs and their partners often give a voice to those most affected by hunger, malnutrition and poverty in complex humanitarian disasters where governments do not have the immediate capacity to provide vulnerable populations with adequate services or inputs for food production, nutrition and food security.

⁴ FAO 2014. Guidelines for Civil Society participation in FAO Regional Conferences.

(http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/partnerships/docs/3_Regional%20Conference%20Guidelines.pdf)

⁵ FAO 2013. CCLM 97/8 Preliminary review of participation of international Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations in meetings of FAO - Legal Aspects (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/029/mi546e.pdf>)

⁶ FAO 2011. FAO in the 21st century (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2307e/i2307e.pdf>).



20. In 1999, FAO adopted the internal *Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations*, which was replaced by the *Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations* adopted in 2013 by Member States at the Council.
21. Through the 2013 Strategy, FAO acknowledges that eradicating hunger, malnutrition and poverty is a fight that can only be won by joining forces with different stakeholders being CSOs as one of the key stakeholders. Under the Strategy guidance, FAO works to enhance the quality, number and impact of FAO's relations with CSOs at the global, regional and national level, providing advice to regional and decentralized offices with for successful collaboration with CSOs.
22. The Strategy considers civil society organizations as those non-state actors that fit within three main categories: member-based organizations (MBOs); non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and social movements (SMs) that work in areas related to FAO's mandate. Due to their varied nature, categorizing CSOs into distinct groups is a challenge and overlaps are likely to exist⁷.
23. From the Strategy some mutual benefits are identified, such as:

Benefits for FAO:
 - ✓ Inclusion in discussions of isolated and vulnerable groups.
 - ✓ Better representation in debates and discussions.
 - ✓ Increased advocacy and mobilization capacity.
 - ✓ Complementary outreach and capacity for field activities, including improved emergency response.
 - ✓ Enhanced ownership of endorsed policies/strategies.
 - ✓ Access to resources (human, physical, knowledge).
Benefits for CSOs:
 - ✓ FAO provides access to a neutral forum for discussions vis-à-vis private sector, Member States and other stakeholders.
 - ✓ Access to information, capacity building, technical knowledge and expertise on key food security areas.
 - ✓ Possibility of suggesting items for discussion in the agendas of FAO meetings.
 - ✓ FAO can facilitate discussion and the exchange of views between CSOs and Member States at all levels.
24. Over the course of six areas of collaboration, such as Field programme, Knowledge sharing and capacity development, Policy dialogue, Joint use of resources in emergency situations, Normative activities and Advocacy and communication, FAO is working at global level to involve networks and organizations with the broadest possible representation vis-à-vis their constituency and region.
25. At national level, FAO works through the framework of the Country programme Framework (CPF) set by Member States. Based on its experience, FAO assists governments in identifying key local CSOs that can contribute to priorities set out in the CPF.

⁷ FAO 2013. Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations. (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3443e.pdf>)



26. FAO has developed a number of administrative tools and procedures to collaborate with CSOs in order to implement the Strategy. The main ones are:
- a) *Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)*: MoUs can be developed by FAO in order to establish a framework for collaboration of significant importance with CSOs.
 - b) *Exchange of Letters*: If collaboration is limited to a reduced period of time, or if its scope is more limited, and does not entail any financial commitments, a more informal exchange of letters may be an appropriate tool. An exchange of letters can be used, for example, to carry out a joint assessment or to coordinate actions while implementing field activities.
 - c) *Letters of Agreement (LoAs)*: Letters of Agreement (LoAs) may constitute a useful administrative tool for contracting services from CSOs. The scope of LoAs is generally limited to contracting services from non-commercial entities (e.g. organizing a meeting in regional, sub-regional or national offices; implementing a transboundary animal disease surveillance programme with local NGOs, etc.).

D. HOW the WORK with CSOS is SUPPORTED?

27. The Partnerships Unit (OPCP) of the Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development Division (OPC), is responsible for developing and strengthening partnerships with non-state actors, including CSOs, producers' organizations, cooperatives, private sector entities and academic and research institutions⁸.
28. OPCR's efforts focus on four areas of work:
- a) Provision of strategic advice to influence policy change, improve governance mechanisms, and facilitate transparent and participatory processes at all levels (global, regional and national).
 - b) Identification, promotion and sustainability of strategic partnerships.
 - c) Development of tools and mechanisms for the establishment of sustainable partnerships.
 - d) Monitoring & evaluation of partnerships.
29. The CSO Partnerships Team serves within FAO's Partnerships Branch (OPCP) and is responsible for promoting FAO's partnerships with CSOs. Its main activities include: awareness-raising and training for FAO staff for the establishment of partnerships with CSOs; capacity building and training to CSOs; liaison functions with CSOs at all levels; support to civil society organizations, networks and platforms in a number of areas of work of the Organization and their participation in key FAO meetings; governing bodies and technical committees⁹.

⁸ FAO 2014. Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations - Frequently Asked Questions. (http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/partnerships/docs/Partnerships%20FAQ%202014.pdf)

⁹ Idem.



E. SUCCESS STORIES WORKING with CSOS ¹⁰

- a) *Field programme:* In the framework of the Organization's Forest Law Governments and Trade Programme (FLEGT) and the Country Programme Framework (CPF) for Liberia, Action-Aid International (AAI) and FAO have developed a Project on Promotion of Women and Community Rights in Forestry Governance and Management in Liberia. This initiative aims to improve the forestry restoration and management abilities of women in 27 Liberian communities.
- b) *Policy dialogue:* The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Alleviation (SSF Guidelines) were developed through a consultative process involving governments, regional organizations, academia and CSOs. FAO continues to foster collaboration with CSOs ensuring an appropriate involvement of small-scale fishers, fish workers and their communities in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at global, regional and national levels. In collaboration with The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)¹¹ some activities (workshops, regional and local meetings) have been organized to raise awareness and support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at decentralized levels, engaging governments, civil society organizations, researchers and relevant regional organizations.
- c) *Joint use of resources in emergency situations:* In Partnership with The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, activities are aimed at promoting resilience and adopting measures for risk and disaster prevention and mitigation for the most vulnerable communities. In 2016, FAO continued capacity development activities for the training of more than 4,000 Federation volunteers through FAO eLearning courses to improve the skills of staff and volunteers world-wide.
- d) *Normative activities, knowledge sharing and capacity development:* At global level FAO and CSOs have developed various forms of collaboration to improve the visibility, awareness and implementation of normative instruments such as The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT); The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines); and The Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security (VRTF).

In the context of VGGT implementation, FAO has continued on the application of a training module to raise the awareness of CSOs and community organizations about VGGT in Colombia, Guatemala, Liberia, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sierra Leone South Africa and Senegal. As result of participatory work undertaken by CSOs in the Land and Territory Working Group of IPC, a Guide (The People's Manual on VGGT) was published for CSOs to facilitate the understanding and application of VGGT at the national context.

- e) *Advocacy and communication:* In partnership with Caritas Internationalis, FAO has developed activities for increasing the dissemination and promotion of key messages for hunger eradication awareness and the call to action, also reinforcing specific initiatives relating to food loss and waste reduction.

¹⁰ More information available at <http://www.fao.org/partnerships/civil-society/en/>

¹¹ The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) is a global platform bringing together more than 800 rural workers' associations and social movements related to farming and food issues.