

Impact case study (REF3)

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| Institution: Coventry University | | |
| Unit of Assessment: 14 | | |
| Title of case study: Supporting Excluded Rural Voices for Participatory Policy-Making on Global Food Insecurity | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: November 2014- December 2020 | | |
| Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit: | | |
| Name(s): | Role(s) (e.g. job title): | Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: |
| Dr Josh Brem-Wilson | Assistant Professor | November 2014 - Present |
| Dr Priscilla Claeys | Associate Professor | September 2015 – present |
| | | |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: June 2018 - July 2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? Y/N No | | |

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

The [UN Committee on World Food Security \(CFS\)](#) is the world's leading platform addressing issues of hunger and food insecurity. CFS policy recommendations are elaborated through a participatory process involving 300 million small-scale food producers through the [Civil Society and Indigenous People's Mechanism \(CSM\)](#). Yet the CSM is facing challenges to ensure the participation of marginalized groups in global governance. Dr. Claeys and Dr. Brem-Wilson have enabled the CSM to address these challenges by increasing the engagement of rural youth, the capacity of CSM Coordinators, the involvement of under-represented sub-regions and the CSM's ability to monitor, leading to greater inclusion and diversity. Their research contributed to political change through the development of new norms that incorporate small-scale farmers' concerns, enhancing the legitimacy, buy-in and implementation of CFS policy outputs.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The most recent estimates for 2019 show that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, almost 690 million people were undernourished. Despite global efforts to address food insecurity, little progress has been reported, because food system governance is marked by exclusionary processes favouring the values and interests of powerful corporations, investors, and big farmers (R1, R5). To tackle this challenge, the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) was reformed in the aftermath of the 2008 Global Food Crisis to become a participatory multi-stakeholder platform that places civil society engagement at its core.

Over the last 12 years, Claeys and Brem-Wilson have analyzed how groups representing small-scale food producers have organized in transnational networks to speak with their own voice at the UN (R1, R2, R4). They have documented how rural and urban constituencies have established the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSM) to participate in CFS debates (R4). They have insisted on the importance of involving food producers at every stage of the policy-making process, leading to greater legitimacy, buy-in and implementation of CFS policy outputs (R5).

Brem-Wilson and Claeys' research on the Civil Society and Indigenous People's Mechanism (CSM), has focused on identifying obstacles to the effective participation of small-scale food producers (R1, R2, R3) and on increasing inclusion and diversity (R4, R5, R6). Funded by the CSM (and internally by Coventry University), Claeys (G1) and Brem-Wilson have conducted online surveys, semi-directed interviews and participation observation, while positioning themselves as scholar-activists working alongside affected constituencies. Their main research

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findings have identified four key areas requiring action within the CSM for it to become a more efficient and inclusive platform:

1. **Foster the participation of rural youth in the CSM:** the independent evaluation of the CSM conducted by Claeys in 2018 showed that very few rural youth were actively involved in the CSM, leading to serious gaps in how global food security policies address the specific challenges facing small-scale food producers under the age of 35, often lacking access to land and rural employment opportunities (R6).
2. **Build the capacity of the CSM coordinators so they can effectively involve small-scale producers from around the world in global policy processes:** Brem-Wilson's participatory research on facilitation within the CSM pointed to a lack of clarity on how the 40 CSM coordinators are supposed to act as "facilitators" to engage with grassroots communities worldwide, resulting in inconsistencies and ineffectiveness, as well as a lack of motivation on their part (R3, R6).
3. **Address gaps in representation from three sub-regions:** the independent evaluation of the CSM conducted by Claeys in 2018 identified imbalances in how the 17 sub-regions participate in the CSM, putting the legitimacy and functioning of the CSM at risk. It recommended taking measures to include missing sub-regions (Central Asia, South Asia and Southern Africa) in the governance bodies of the CSM (R6).
4. **Develop new data collection practices for a more inclusive CSM:** the independent evaluation of the CSM conducted by Claeys in 2018 pointed to the lack of an efficient strategy for data collection and monitoring. The lack of process in place to collect data on participation in the CSM, disaggregated by gender, age, constituency or sub-region, prevented the CSM from addressing imbalances in participation (R6).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1. Brem-Wilson, J. (2017). 'La Vía Campesina and the UN Committee on World Food Security: Affected Publics and Institutional Dynamics in the Nascent Transnational Public Sphere', *Review of International Studies*, 43(2): 302-329. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210516000309>

R2. Brem-Wilson, J. (2019). 'Legitimizing global governance: Publicisation, Affectedness, and the Committee on World Food Security', *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, 3(5-6), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2018.1552536>

R3. Brem-Wilson, J. (2018) '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'. Available at: http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/CSM_FacilitationDiscussionPaper_English_11.2.19.pdf

R4. Claeys, P. & J. Duncan (2018). 'Do we need to categorize it? Reflections on constituencies and quotas as tools for negotiating difference in the global food sovereignty convergence space', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 46, 7, 1477-1498.
DOI: 10.1080/03066150.2018.1512489 <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2018.1512489>

R5. Duncan, J, & P. Claeys (2018). Politicizing food security governance through participation: opportunities and opposition. *Food Security*, 10, 6, 1411–1424.
DOI: 10.1007/s12571-018-0852-x <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-018-0852-x>

R6. Priscilla Claeys & Jessica Duncan (2018): Evaluation of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) for relations with the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS), Full Report, August 2018. Available at: <http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/CSM-Evaluation-Report-2018-ilovepdf-compressed.pdf>

G1. Claeys, P. (PI) (2017-18). 'Independent Evaluation of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM)'. UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Total grant: €12,000. (£10,217.)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

In 2018, Claeys released an independent evaluation of the CSM (R6), while Brem-Wilson produced a report on facilitation practices within the CSM (R3). These documents contained recommendations for improving internal functioning (see four key areas above), many of which were adopted by the Coordination Committee of the CSM. This contributed to political change through the development of new legal norms that incorporate small-scale farmers' concerns and priorities, leading to greater legitimacy, buy-in and implementation of CFS policy outputs. Substantial impacts can be identified in the following four areas:

Enhanced participation of rural youth.

'The CSM evaluation generated awareness and created momentum around the importance of increasing youth participation' (S1). This led to the following impacts: a) the Coordination Committee of the CSM issued a call to all participating organizations asking them to appoint youth leaders (S1); b) as a result, the dormant Youth Working Group was reinforced (gaining over 100 active participants), and new facilitators and coordinators were appointed (S1); c) this led to 'remarkable strides in increased youth participation in the CSM' (S10, p. 16), with an increase from 3% in 2014 to 25% at the annual CSM Forums of 2018 and 2019 (S10, p.6); d) the Youth Working Group drafted a statement highlighting their [vision and key policy demands](#), including around the [COVID crisis](#) (S1); e) the Youth Working Group influenced a number of CFS policy outputs at the 46th session of the CFS. A new and prioritized thematic workstream on "promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food system" was added to the CFS workplan [2020-2023](#) (S2, p.6, X, 28, c), and the 'urgency of involving youth and women in the urbanization and rural transformation debate' was recognized in 2019 at the 46th Session of the CFS, in the workstream on [Urbanization, Rural Transformation and Implications for FSN](#) (S3, p.2, 4). As a direct result of Claeys' recommendations, the inclusion and participation of the rural youth in the CFS were greatly enhanced and new legal norms were developed that protect the rights of the rural youth. The evaluation 'was instrumental to these changes' (S1).

Increased capacity of CSM sub-regional and constituency coordinators.

The CSM does not represent or speak on behalf of affected constituencies but facilitates their participation. Facilitation is therefore key to its identity and purpose. Yet, Brem-Wilson's research 'was the first attempt in its 8-year existence to systematically assess the practice of facilitation in the CSM' (S4). Brem-Wilson's research had the following impacts: a) 'responding to recommendations' in Brem-Wilson's report, the Coordination Committee of the CSM 'decided to constitute a specific Facilitation Working Group' (S4); b) 'the first task taken on by the Facilitation Working Group in June 2019, again addressing Brem-Wilson's recommendations, was to launch an inclusive process of co-producing a (...) ['common understanding' of facilitation](#). This resulted in a framework document, adopted in January 2020, that is now established as the CSM's definition of facilitation' (S4, S6); c) the Facilitation Working Group developed a new facilitation guide, leading to improved practices within the CSM (S4, S5); d) CSM Coordinators developed a better understanding of their roles as facilitators, leading to their increased engagement and motivation (S4, S5). The research led to enhanced practitioner capacity and substantial changes in professional standards and behaviours.

Increased representation of small-scale producers from 3 of the 17 CSM sub-regions.

The CSM evaluation identified the 'important weakness' that 'some sub-regions participate more than others' within the mechanism (S7), and recommended reaching out to missing sub-regions. 'After that recommendation was discussed at the meeting of the Coordination Committee of the CSM in June 2018', the Secretariat 'took several steps to proactively foster the participation of

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underrepresented sub-regions, focusing on Central Asia, South Asia and Southern Africa' (S7). This led to the following impacts: a) the CSM appointed representatives from these 3 sub-regions to its Coordination Committee (S7); b) the CSM organized a grassroots [consultation](#) for the Southern African region, 'which received dedicated funding after the evaluation identified this as a priority' (S7). The objective of this meeting was to 'reactivate civil society engagement' from 8 countries in the sub-region and identify joint policy priorities for CFS work (S8, p.18). The independent evaluation 'proved to be an essential learning tool for our organization, as it... offered concrete and pragmatic ways forward' (S7). It 'contributed to significant improvements' (S7), by strengthening inclusion within the CSM, and influencing the rights and participation opportunities of small-scale food producers from 3 important sub-regions.

Development of new practices and creation of new spaces for a more inclusive CSM.

'The CSM evaluation identified a key weakness around (...) data collection practices (...), which were assessed as 'insufficient to fully assess inclusivity' (S9). The CSM Secretariat 'took on board the recommendation of drastically reviewing the participant registration sheet in order to gather more personal data to be able to better track and monitor who participates' (S9). This new registration sheet was implemented at the CSM Forum in 2018 and 2019. As a result, the CSM Secretariat is now able to 'have a clear view on which constituencies and sub-regions participate and which groups are over or under-represented' (S9). 'This step marks an absolute breakthrough... as such information gathering is essential to monitoring the CSM's level of inclusivity and to being able to identify and address weak areas' (S10, p.17).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

S1. Testimonial, Program and Communication Officer, CSM Secretariat.

S2. Final Report, CFS 46 (Outlining the CFS Multi-Year Plan of Work [MYPOW 2020-2023](#).)

S3. Minutes, Session VI, [Urbanization, Rural Transformation and Implications for FSN at CFS 46](#).

S4. Testimonial, CSM Facilitation Working Group Coordinator, ACTUAR Programme Officer.

S5. Testimonial, Senior Policy Advisor, Oxfam Belgium.

S6. Guidance. Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism for Relations with the United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CSM). (2020). ['Common Understanding of Facilitation in Principle and Practice'](#).

S7. Testimonial, CSM Secretariat Coordinator.

S8. Report, [Sub-regional Meeting of CSM Southern Africa \(March 2019\)](#)

S9. Testimonial, CSM Secretariat Finance and Logistics Officer.

S10. Report, 'Assessment of Data Collection by the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism CSM, 2018–2019'. (Independent assessment the uptake of recommendations of the CSM evaluation undertaken by Priscilla Claeys and Jessica Duncan.)