



Working Paper on 'Facilitating change in M4P programmes'

By Daniel Roduner and Carsten Schulz, AGRIDEA
Isabelle Fragnière, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

July 2011

Summary

Because conventional programmes dealing with private sector or value chain development tend to provide direct support to enterprises or other actors in the market, they rarely achieve scale or sustainability. They often assume a market function, introducing market distortions. The M4P (making markets work for the poor) approach introduces a shift in paradigm from direct intervention to facilitation, catalysing change in the market system as a whole. Facilitation is therefore one of the four core principles of M4P (along with a systemic market approach, sustainability and scale) and a cross-cutting feature across the entire life-cycle of the programme. But what does facilitation mean in practice and what do facilitators do?

Facilitators are bodies (e.g. NGOs, programmes, government departments, business development services) that intervene in markets so that these achieve social/public objectives. Their role is time-bound and finite, an 'agent' (or catalyst) for positive market change but without taking up a function in the market system. A facilitator must clarify its role and responsibility and constantly update its understanding of the system, catalyse change and engage with all actors and functions while at the same time remain neutral.

There is no template for facilitation but it depends highly on the context, the phase of the programme and the type of interventions. It ranges from a 'facilitative attitude' influencing decision-making to concrete facilitation activities. It should respect core rules such as valid information shared by all stakeholders (transparency), free and informed choices by the participants (self-determination) and internal commitment to those choices (ownership and responsibility). M4P facilitation also requires understanding and responsiveness to local context, flexibility, leadership and entrepreneurial thinking. However, although requiring flexibility, facilitation should always be guided by the overarching strategy to crowd in other actors into the system and underpinned by appropriate analysis. The art of facilitation lies in the balance between flexible and strategic interventions, and a golden rule could be "act and tread lightly". In addition, it should not be forgotten that facilitators are not only interacting with market systems but also with social systems which need to be analysed and taken into account.

The main areas where facilitation intervenes include capacity building (training, coaching and promoting exchange), research and development, promoting a shared vision among stakeholders, defining roles and responsibilities, supporting the creation of linkages and networks, identifying business opportunities and supporting joint monitoring and evaluation by fostering mutual learning processes by all parties. However, it is necessary to constantly check that potential system actors that could take up these functions are not being crowded out of the system.

Different stakeholders have different roles and responsibilities during the different phases of a programme that need to be clearly defined, and this also applies to the facilitator. Every participant needs to know what she/he will and can do, and what she/he can or will not do. Mapping all the actors, building a project on their incentives and capacities and clarifying 'who does' and 'who pays' can help position the facilitator and the other stakeholders in the project environment.

Facilitation is not restricted to programme implementation or to the implementing agent. It needs to be included at all stages of the programme cycle, from initial design to evaluation and it concerns all agents, from donors to strategic partners. This also implies that the governance structure of the programme has to be adapted to an involvement of endogenous stakeholders (the concerned population, enterprises, government agencies, social networks, etc.) right from the planning stage of the intervention in order to promote local ownership and sustainability.

Finally, the Working Paper contains a checklist that donors and implementers can use to help them think through their role as a facilitator, according to the M4P principles.