



Preparatory events towards the Second Global Parliamentary Summit  
against Hunger and Malnutrition

# Thematic session: Parliamentary action on tackling gender inequality to achieve food security and improved nutrition for all



## Thematic session

Parliamentary action on tackling gender inequality to achieve food security and improved nutrition for all

**When:** 27 October 2022,  
13:00 - 15:00 (Rome time)

**Where:** Online (Zoom platform); a link will be provided upon registration

## Session summary

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), together with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), have organized the thematic session "*Parliamentary action on tackling gender inequality to achieve food security and improved nutrition for all*", within the framework of the preparatory events for the Second Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition, to be held in 2023. This session aims to improve knowledge and facilitate political dialogue around the role of parliamentarians in promoting food security and nutrition, through the adoption of gender responsive approaches.

## Background <sup>i</sup>

There is a gender gap in food security and nutrition, and it is growing. Globally and in every region of the world, food insecurity is more prevalent among women than men. Women and girls are more likely to suffer from various forms of malnutrition, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight, obesity and anemia. According to the 2022 SOFI report, in 2019, nearly one in three women aged 15 to 49 years (571 million) were affected by anemia.<sup>ii</sup> The absolute number of women with anemia has risen steadily from 493 million in 2000 to 570.8 million in 2019, which has implications for female morbidity and mortality and can lead to adverse pregnancy and newborn outcomes.

With the COVID-19 outbreak, the gender gap in food security and nutrition has grown significantly as women have been disproportionately impacted by the economic crisis triggered by the pandemic and by measures to contain it. In 2021, 31.9 percent of women in the world were moderately or severely food insecure, compared to 27.6 percent of men – a gap of more than 4 percentage points. In 2019, this gap was 1.7 percentage points.

The gender gap in food security and nutrition is the result of pervasive gender inequalities and discrimination against women and girls, including: unequal access to, and control over, productive resources (e.g. land, assets, information, technologies, and extension, financial and other services); lower access to education and decent jobs, markets, training opportunities, and social protection schemes; lower participation in decision-making processes and in leadership positions in producer organizations; and an unequal burden on women and girls in terms of unpaid domestic responsibilities.

Discriminatory socio-cultural norms inhibit women's and girls' access to nutritious food and healthy diets, predisposing them to increased risk of anemia and malnutrition. These gender inequalities negatively affect women's productivity and ability to manage risks and facilitate their exposure to exploitation and violence. This in turn exacerbates gender-based poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, especially during economic slowdowns and crises, or following conflict and climate-related disasters.<sup>iii</sup>

The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** acknowledges the importance of gender equality for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While SDG 5 aims to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls,” gender equality is recognised as crucial for achieving all the SDGs, including SDG 2, which seeks to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”.

Promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls are essential for ending hunger, improving nutrition and realising the right to adequate food for all. Policies and interventions that address gender inequalities and strengthen women's roles in food systems can be powerful drivers for reducing poverty, stimulating economic growth, protecting natural resources, mitigating and adapting to climate change, and making our food systems more equitable, resilient and sustainable.<sup>iv</sup> Improving women's access to productive resources tends to boost agricultural productivity and output. Providing adequate support to women in food systems is therefore crucial for feeding a global population that is expected to reach 9.8 billion people by 2050. Empowering women also leads to improved nutrition outcomes for women and their family members, lowering infant mortality and reducing child malnutrition.

The importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls for food security and nutrition has led the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to draft the *Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition*. These Voluntary Guidelines aim to support CFS Member states to advance gender equality as part of their efforts to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition by

providing policy guidance for all stakeholders involved in advancing food security and nutrition, gender equality and women's empowerment.

Parliamentarians also recognise the need to tackle gender inequalities in the context of efforts to achieve food security and improved nutrition for all. The *Final Declaration of the Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition* (Madrid Declaration) acknowledges and reaffirms the need to introduce specific legislation and policies to ensure women's right to adequate food, and to end gender-based discriminations. It also signals parliamentarians' commitment to gender responsive poverty reduction. During dialogues organised to feed into the United Nations Food Systems Summit, parliamentarians stressed the need to reduce the gender gap in food security and nutrition, to adopt gender responsive laws and measures and to include women in decision-making processes for food system transformation.

Between March and September 2021, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) organised seven Virtual parliamentary dialogues on food security and nutrition in the time of COVID-19 as a follow-up to the first Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition. These dialogues highlighted several priority actions for parliamentarians in the context of promoting food security and improved nutrition, including tackling gender inequality. The ECOWAS Network of Parliamentarians on Gender Equality and Investments in Agriculture and Food Security also organised a series of dialogues as a follow-up to the Summit, exploring opportunities for parliamentary action for gender equality and resilient food systems in the face of COVID-19.

On all those occasions, Parliamentarians demonstrated their awareness of their role as custodians of political commitments, showed their determination to promote, nurture and strengthen the strong and shared political will needed to build back better food systems - in the aftermath of the crisis - and ensure that the COVID-19 recovery sets all countries on a path to meeting the SDGs by 2030, with a specific focus on SDG 5.

### **Parliamentarians have a crucial role to play**

Parliamentarians have an important role to play in addressing gender inequalities to achieve food security and improved nutrition for all. They can contribute by drafting and adopting robust gender responsive legislation across relevant policy areas and sectors (e.g. health, agriculture), and by advocating for targeted policies and programmes to achieve more equitable benefits for men and women in terms of improved livelihoods and better nutrition and food security among others. These could include policies and legislation intended to address discrimination and barriers that women face in food systems or to promote investments that empower women and address the nutritional needs of women and girls.

Parliamentarians can also promote women's political leadership and gender mainstreaming within parliaments and use their oversight powers to enhance the adoption of gender responsive budgeting, pushing for more funding for effective measures promoting gender equality.<sup>v</sup>

Moreover, they can engage citizens and build alliances with other stakeholders to advocate, promote, and protect women rights and gender equality.

Parliamentary action to tackle gender inequality is paramount to achieve food security and improved nutrition for all by 2030. AECID and FAO will convene a second Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition in 2023. To promote discussion and debate in the lead-up to the forthcoming Summit, as well as a follow-up action, FAO and IISD have organised this session to promote dialogue and peer learning on how parliamentarians can promote gender equality in the context of their efforts to achieve improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all.

### Objectives

The session aims to raise awareness among parliamentarians about how gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls exacerbates hunger and malnutrition, and to identify opportunities for parliamentary action to tackle gender inequalities in the context of ending hunger, promoting food security and improved nutrition, and making food systems more equitable, resilient and sustainable, by:

- **Promoting political dialogue and bold actions** around gender equality and women's empowerment to achieve food security and improved nutrition for all;
- **Identifying and sharing experiences** of policies, legislation, good practices, and lessons learned on gender equality and women's empowerment in the fight against hunger and malnutrition;
- **Compiling key takeaways and main conclusions** to position gender equality women's empowerment on the agenda for the forthcoming Second Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition.

### General methodology

The thematic session "*Parliamentary action on tackling gender inequality to achieve food security and improved nutrition for all*" will be held through the **Zoom** platform (the link will be provided upon registration). This activity will take place in a single videoconference, from **13:00 to 15:00** (Rome time) on Thursday 27 October. Interpretation will be available in English, French and Spanish.

The thematic session will be composed of three different spaces:

- **Scene-Setting Presentations:** The session will begin with a keynote opening address and a presentation on why gender matters for food security and nutrition.
- **Thematic Panels:** Two thematic panels will feature three presentations each. The purpose of these presentations is to share relevant cases and experiences in the domain of public action to promote gender equality as part of efforts to improve food security and nutrition.
- **Discussion:** A space for discussion will be opened after each Thematic Panel. Each space for discussion will last 10 minutes, giving parliamentarians the opportunity to succinctly share their reflections on, and reactions to, the presentations and issues raised.
- **Informative Session:** Presentation of various FAO tools delivered by FAO and IISD staff.

<b>Thematic session:</b> <b>“Parliamentary action on tackling gender inequality to achieve food security and improved nutrition for all”</b> <b>27 October 2022, 13:00 - 15:00 (Rome time)</b>	
Time	Activity
13:00 - 13:05	<b>Welcome remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mr Benjamin Davis</i>, Director, Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division at FAO</li> </ul>
13:05 - 13:15	<b>Opening</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ms Tawakkol Karman</i>, Nobel Peace Prize 2011</li> </ul>
13:15 - 13:30	<b>Presentation on why gender matters for food security and nutrition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ms Tacko Ndiaye</i>, Gender Team Leader, Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division at FAO</li> </ul> <b>CFS Policy Guidelines to advance gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mr Anthony Muriithi</i>, Vice-Chair, Committee on World Food Security (CFS)</li> </ul>
13:30 - 13:50	<b>Thematic Panel 1:</b> Parliamentary action to put gender equality at the center for efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable food systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Hon. Pina Picierno</i>, Vice-President of the European Parliament and Member of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality</li> <li>• <i>Hon. Angélique Ngoma</i>, Member of the Gabonese National Assembly and President of the APF Cooperation and Development Committee</li> <li>• <i>Hon. Elena Diego</i>, Senator of Spain and President of the International Cooperation Commission</li> </ul>
13:50 - 14:00	<b>Discussion 1</b>
14:00 - 14:20	<b>Thematic Panel 2:</b> Promoting legislation that equalizes Rural Women’s access to and control over productive resources, markets and services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Hon. Abdoulaye Vilane</i>, President of the Network of ECOWAS Parliamentarians for Gender Equality and Investments in Agriculture and Food Security</li> <li>• <i>Hon. Sahar Albazar</i>, member of the Parliament of Egypt and President of the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians</li> <li>• <i>Hon. Trinidad Rocha Robles</i>, Senator of Bolivia and President of the International Policy Commission of the Plurinational Legislative Assembly</li> </ul>
14:20 - 14:30	<b>Discussion 2</b>
14:30 - 14:55	<b>Informative Session FAO - IISD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ms Ilaria Sisto</i>, Gender and Development Officer, FAO Presentation of e-learning for parliamentarians “Achieving Gender Equality in Climate Change and Food Systems”, FAO</li> <li>• <i>Ms Larissa Dominguez</i>, Family Farming Specialist, FAO Presentation of “Guidelines for gender mainstreaming in public policies for family farming”, FAO</li> <li>• <i>Mr Sean Woolfrey</i>, Senior Policy Advisor, Agriculture, Trade and Investment, IISD Presentation of Advocacy Tool and Survey for second Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition, IISD</li> </ul>
14:55 - 15:00	<b>Closing remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dr. Marcela Villarreal</i>, Director of Partnerships and UN Collaboration Division, FAO</li> </ul>

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the information in this concept note is drawn from the draft CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition.

[https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs2122/Gender/CFS\\_GEWE\\_VGs\\_First\\_Draft\\_en.pdf](https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs2122/Gender/CFS_GEWE_VGs_First_Draft_en.pdf).

<sup>ii</sup> FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2021. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all.

<sup>iii</sup> FAO et al., 2021.

<sup>iv</sup> FAO et al., 2021.

<sup>v</sup> ParlAmericas & UNDP. 2019. Parliament's role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: An adapted version for the Americas and the Caribbean.

[https://www.parlAmericas.org/uploads/documents/ENG\\_Publication\\_SDGs.pdf](https://www.parlAmericas.org/uploads/documents/ENG_Publication_SDGs.pdf).