



# Open Ended Working Group on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Doc No: CFS OEWG-Gender/2020/10/30/01

## Terms of Reference for the preparation of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition

Draft version for discussion

### A. Background and rationale

1. Advancing gender equality and women's empowerment is critical to achieving CFS' vision of ending hunger and ensuring food security and nutrition for all, and for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food.
2. In order to transform this vision into a reality, at its 46<sup>th</sup> Session in October 2019, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) took the decision to develop *Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition* (referred to as the "Guidelines" in this document), as part of its Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW) for 2020-2023<sup>1</sup>.
3. Currently, the global food system produces enough food to feed every person on the planet. However, due to a range of diverse challenges, an increasing number of people are failing to meet their daily food and nutrition needs. In 2019, almost 690 million people were estimated to be hungry, up by nearly 60 million since 2014, representing 8.9 % of the total population<sup>2</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic may add an additional 83 to 132 million people to the ranks of the undernourished in 2020.<sup>3</sup> Malnutrition in all its forms - undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight and obesity - is now the number one factor contributing to the global burden of diseases and reduced life expectancy. In this challenging global context, closing the gender gap and supporting women to use their full potential to achieve food security is more important than ever.
4. Gender equality is essential to achieving all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as to fostering food system transformation in line with economic, social and environmental sustainability. The importance of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) for sustainable development was acknowledged by the international

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<sup>1</sup> CFS 2020-2023 Multi-Year Programme of Work, CFS 2019/46/7.

<sup>2</sup> The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI), 2020.

<sup>3</sup> SOFI, 2020.

community through the adoption of gender equality as a stand-alone goal (SDG5) and also as a cross-cutting theme to all SDGs. Thus, systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is crucial.

5. A large body of evidence demonstrates the positive links between gender equality and food security and nutrition. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, it is also instrumental for poverty reduction and economic growth. Achievement of gender equality has a positive correlation with increased household welfare, production and improved efficiency in many sectors, including agriculture, where gender inequality in access to and control over resources continues undermining performance, leading to below-potential economic outcomes.

6. Furthermore, empowering women and investing in their wellbeing is one of the most effective ways for improving nutrition, lowering infant mortality and reducing child malnutrition, helping to break intergenerational cycles of malnutrition. Women also play important roles in sustainable natural resource management, mitigating and adapting to climate change and conserving biodiversity. Considering all the above, investing in women and promoting gender equality is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do.

7. Women play active roles along the whole supply chain in agri-food systems as farmers, processors, traders, wage-workers and entrepreneurs. FAO estimates that women provide over 37 percent of the world's rural agricultural employment, a figure which rises to 48 percent for low-income countries<sup>4</sup>. However, studies show that yields on plots managed by women are lower than those managed by men because they do not have access to the same inputs as men. If they did, their yields would be the same as men's. Closing the gender gap would increase women's yields on farms by 20–30 percent, raise total agricultural output by 2.5–4 percent, and potentially reduce the number of hungry people by 12–17 percent.<sup>5</sup> Equalizing access between men and women to agricultural resources, inputs and services, would result in significant gains in agricultural productivity and increase incomes and families welfare. Providing adequate support to women in agri-food systems is critical for the planet to feed nine billion people in 2050 and produce 50 percent more food.

8. Despite positive progress made over decades in narrowing gender gaps, gender inequality persists as women continue to face discrimination in many areas - including access to and control over key productive resources, assets, services and economic opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes at household, community and national levels – that negatively impacts the four dimensions of food security: availability, access, utilization and stability.

9. Discrimination also results in a gender gap in accessing food, with higher prevalence of food insecurity and malnutrition among women. The gender gap increased from 2018 to 2019<sup>6</sup> and is expected to widen as the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures to contain it are having a negative and gender-differentiated impact on food security and nutrition.<sup>7</sup> Systemic deprivation and discrimination perpetuates the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition.

<sup>4</sup> Estimated impact on food security and nutrition. Systemic deprivation and discrimination perpetuates the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition. Labour Organization (ILO) 2020. World Employment and Social Outlook. Geneva, Switzerland. (also available at <http://ilo.org/wesodata>).

<sup>5</sup> The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11. WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE -Closing the gender gap for development.

<sup>6</sup> SOFI, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> [FAO Policy Brief on Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 and equitable policy responses in agriculture, food security and nutrition](#), 2020.

10. While gender inequality is largely experienced by women and girls, discriminatory barriers and limiting societal norms and expectations also prevent men and boys from fulfilling their full potential. Thus, changing gender roles and relations towards equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities will benefit everybody. It is crucial that both men and women take joint responsibility and have an active role in this-process. 

## B. Objective of the Guidelines

11. The objective of the Guidelines is to support Governments and development partners in their efforts to achieve gender equality and promote women's empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition, towards the progressive realization of the right to adequate food.
12. The Guidelines will provide concrete policy guidance based on science, best practices and lessons learnt on gender mainstreaming, gender transformative interventions and innovative solutions, with the aim of improving legal and policy framework and policies, institutional arrangements, national plans and programmes, and promoting increased investments in human and financial resources. 
13. The Guidelines aim to foster greater policy coherence between gender equality and food security and nutrition agendas and promote mutually reinforcing policy measures. Generating and disseminating evidence on opportunities and constraints helps to raise awareness and supports the development of policies and programs that coherently integrate gender equality with food security and nutrition objectives.
14. The Guidelines will contribute to accelerating action by all stakeholders at all levels to achieve the vision of CFS and the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as part of the United Nations Decade of Action for Sustainable Development (2020-2029). Given the important role that women play in family farming as well as in household food security and nutrition, the Guidelines will also contribute to the implementation of the Action Plans of the UN Decades of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), on Water for Sustainable Development (2018-2028) and on Family Farming (2019-2028).

## C. Scope of the Guidelines

15. The Guidelines will:
  - 15.1 Outline women's fundamental contributions to, and roles in, achieving food security and nutrition, as well as to reducing poverty, addressing climate change and fostering sustainable development. They will emphasize that full and equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men is essential for achieving these objectives. 
  - 15.2 Consolidate all previous work of the CFS on gender, including: the [CFS Policy recommendations on Gender and Food Security \(2011\)](#), and the [background document and outcomes of the 2017 CFS Forum on Women's Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition](#).
  - 15.3 Build on gender statistics, evidence and research and on concrete experiences and good practices of all CFS members, including the lessons learned and knowledge generated by

relevant programmes being implemented by UN agencies and bodies, including the three Rome-based Agencies (FAO, IFAD, WFP), and other development partners.

15.4 Identify opportunities to promote gender equality and suggest strategies to overcome gender discrimination and structural barriers in key areas of food security and nutrition, including (but not limited to): 

- In division of labour between men and women in relation to food security and nutrition at household and community levels, considering both productive and reproductive  roles;
- In access to markets and value chains, and decent work;
- In access to and control over productive resources, such as land, agricultural inputs, credit and other financial services;
- In women's and men's participation in decision-making, leadership and representation and agency in shaping public policies;
- In access to capacity building, training, education, rural advisory services, knowledge and information;
- In access to technology, including ICT-based, digital and agri-innovations; and
- In social protection schemes and food assistance. 

 15.5 Underline the importance of collecting, analysing and using relevant gender-, sex- and age-disaggregated data to support evidence-based policies, programmes, plans and strategies and adequate monitoring and impact evaluation.

15.6 Promote context-specific actions with a focus on women in situations of vulnerability recognizing that women are not a homogenous group, but they often experience different, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination across and throughout countries.

15.7 Advocate the use of transformative approaches that are able to tackle both the symptoms and the structural causes of gender inequality, with the aim of achieving lasting change in terms of the power and choices women have over their own lives, rather than just temporary increases in opportunities.

15.8 Draw attention to the need for governments to stand behind their commitments to achieving gender equality, women's and girl's rights and women's empowerment by translating those commitments into national policies, programmes, and investments with sufficient human and financial resources.<sup>8</sup>

15.9 Highlight the need to work towards the implementation  the UN General Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), especially its General

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<sup>8</sup> CFS/2017/44.

Recommendation 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women<sup>9</sup> and other legally binding international conventions<sup>10</sup>, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).<sup>11</sup>



15.10 Complement and contribute to the effective implementation of existing [CFS policy products](#) and forthcoming products such as: Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, and Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches.

15.11 Include guidance on the evaluation of the use and application of the Guidelines within the framework of the CFS monitoring mechanism.

#### **D. Type of instrument**

16. The Guidelines will be voluntary and non-binding and should be interpreted and applied consistent with existing obligations under national and international law, and with due regard to voluntary commitments under applicable regional and international instruments. These guidelines, once endorsed by CFS, are to be interpreted and applied in accordance with national legal systems and their institutions.

17. The Voluntary Guidelines are complementary to and support national, regional and international initiatives which aim at addressing all forms of discrimination against women that negatively impact on food security and nutrition. In particular, CFS guidance should build on and integrate existing instruments adopted on this topic within the context of the UN system.

18. Notwithstanding the voluntary nature of CFS products, the dissemination, use and application by all stakeholders of the Guidelines will be encouraged at all levels, as appropriate, to support to countries in achieving gender equality and food security and nutrition objectives. 

#### **E. Intended users**

19. The Guidelines are intended for all stakeholders that are involved in addressing, or are affected by, gender equality and women's empowerment. They primarily address governments at all levels to help design and implement public policies, as their primary objective is to provide concrete instruments to build policy coherence between and across public sector policies at national, regional and global levels. They are also of value to other actors involved in policy discussions and policy implementation processes. These actors include:

- a) Governmental actors, including relevant ministries and national, sub-national and local institutions;

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<sup>9</sup> 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) regarding the empowerment of rural women and girls.

<sup>10</sup> Legally binding international conventions include: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) relevant ILO Conventions, Examples of regional agreements and strategies: Gender Strategy of the CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication 2025; the Gender Strategy of the African Union 2017-2027.

<sup>11</sup> CFS/2017/44.

- b) Intergovernmental and regional organizations, including UN agencies and bodies with a mandate in food security and nutrition;
- c) Civil society, including women's and farmers' organizations;
- d) Private sector;
- e) Research organizations and universities;
- f) Development agencies, including international financial institutions; and
- g) Philanthropic foundations.

#### **F. Process, tentative timeframe and budget estimate**

20. The development of draft Guidelines is planned for 2021-2022, after the approval of Terms of Reference (TORs) by Plenary at CFS 47 in February 2021. The Guidelines are targeted for adoption at CFS 49 in October 2022. The Guidelines will result from an inclusive consultative process open to all interested stakeholders, inclusiveness being a core principle of CFS, which will ensure ownership and legitimacy. In addition to Members, the participation of all groups mentioned in the previous paragraph will be encouraged.
21. The Open Ended Working Group on Gender (OEWG) will provide guidance for the consultation process that will be facilitated and implemented by the CFS Secretariat, which is tasked with drafting the different versions of the guidelines, with the assistance of a Technical Task Team on GEWE (TTT). The TTT is composed of technical experts nominated by the representatives of the CFS Advisory Group. They will provide inputs to the Secretariat to prepare background documents for the OEWG meetings and successive versions of the Guidelines. Regular updates on the status of the policy convergence process will be provided to the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group.
22. OEWG meetings will be held regularly to advance the preparation of the guidelines. They will be chaired by the two co-chairs appointed by the CFS Bureau in July 2020. Members and other CFS stakeholders will be encouraged to actively participate in all stages of development of the Guidelines.
23. Regional consultations<sup>12</sup> with representatives of countries and other constituencies in five regions (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Near East, Latin America and the Caribbean) are planned in order to obtain inputs, comments and suggestions on how best to align the guidelines with regional and national priorities and needs. Additional opportunities, such as e-consultations and calls for written inputs, will permit other interested stakeholders to contribute to this process.
24. The various versions of the Guidelines at the different stages of the process (Zero Draft, First Draft and Final Version for negotiation) will be made available in the six official UN languages (Arabic, Chinese English, French, Russian and Spanish). Interpretation in those languages will be provided during formal negotiation of the final version of the Guidelines.
25. The budget estimate to finalize this process amounts to USD 700,000. It covers the organization of regional multistakeholder consultations, the translation of background documents for the OEWG meetings, the interpretation of the policy negotiation process, and the organization of an expert meeting and e-consultation. Adequate financial and human resources should be secured in advance to enable a successful policy convergence process.

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<sup>12</sup> Depending on the availability of funding.



**Annex: Definitions** (provided in the [UN Women Gender Equality Glossary, except for empowerment](#))

**Empowerment** is the process by which people expand their ability to make strategic life choices, particularly in contexts in which this ability had been denied to them ([Naila Kabeer, 1999](#)). In this definition, the ability to exercise choice encompasses three dimensions: resources (defined to include not only access but also future claims to material, human, and social resources), agency (including processes of decision-making, negotiation, and even deception and manipulation), and achievements (well-being outcomes).  Women's empowerment is dependent on collective solidarity in the public arena as well as individual assertiveness in the private arena, with women's organizations and social movements having an important role to play in creating conditions for change ([Institute of Development Studies](#)). This points out to the importance of structural change as structural inequalities cannot be addressed by individuals alone.

**Gender** refers to the roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. In addition to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender also refers to the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, as are other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, age, etc.

Source: UN Women, OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming - Concepts and definitions

**Gender discrimination** is defined as: "Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." [United Nations, 1979. 'Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women'. Article 1] Discrimination can stem from both law (de jure) or from practice (de facto). The CEDAW Convention recognizes and addresses both forms of discrimination, whether contained in laws, policies, procedures or practice.

#### **De jure discrimination**

E.g. In some countries, the law states that women (citizens) who marry foreign men lose their citizenship and/or property rights. On the other hand, men (citizens) married to foreigners do not lose their citizenship and/or property rights.

#### **De facto discrimination**

E.g. The practice of many immigration officials in various countries is to find a woman traveling alone with her minor children "suspicious" while men traveling with their children are seldom questioned.

Source: [Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#)

**Gender equality** refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.

Source: UN Women, [OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming - Concepts and definitions](#)

**Gender equity** - The preferred terminology within the United Nations is gender equality, rather than gender equity. Gender equity denotes an element of interpretation of social justice, usually based on tradition, custom, religion or culture, which is most often to the detriment to women. Such use of equity in relation to the advancement of women has been determined to be unacceptable. During the Beijing conference in 1995 it was agreed that the term equality would be utilized.

This was later confirmed by the CEDAW committee in its General Recommendation 28: "States parties are called upon to use exclusively the concepts of equality of women and men or gender equality and not to use the concept of gender equity in implementing their obligations under the Convention. The latter concept is used in some jurisdictions to refer to fair treatment of women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment, or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities".

Sources: UN Women, OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming - Concepts and definitions; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2010), General recommendation No. 28 on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

**Gender gap** refers to any disparity between women and men's condition or position in society. It is often used to refer to a difference in average earnings between women and men, e.g. "gender pay gap." However, gender gaps can be found in many areas, such as the four pillars that the World Economic Forum uses to calculate its Gender Gap Index, namely: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment.

Source: See Hausmann, Ricardo, Laura D. Tyson, Saadia Zahidi, Editors (2012). "The Global Gender Gap Report 2012". World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland.

**Gender mainstreaming** is the chosen approach of the United Nations system and international community toward realizing progress on women's and girl's rights, as a sub-set of human rights to which the United Nations dedicates itself. It is not a goal or objective on its own. It is a strategy for implementing greater equality for women and girls in relation to men and boys.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a way to make women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

Sources: UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women. "Gender Equality, UN Coherence and You", ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2