



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

9 December 2020, 9.30-12.30 (virtual)

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Co-Chairs' Summary

ITEM 1 - Introductory remarks

The Co-Chair of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), Ms. Satu Lassila, Permanent Representative of Finland to the Rome-based agencies, welcomed participants to this meeting and offered the apologies of the Co-Chair Ambassador Joséphine Ouédraogo of Burkina Faso who was unable to attend the meeting.

The objective of this meeting was to reach consensus on the revised version of draft Terms of Reference (TORs) for the *Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition*. The TORs, once agreed by the OEWG, would be presented for decision at CFS 47 in February 2021 under Agenda Item III dealing with the "Rolling Section" of the CFS Multi-Year Programme of Work for 2020-2023. The revised version of the TORs which was shared with the participants before this meeting incorporated comments made at the first OEWG meeting on 30 October, and subsequently in writing.

The Co-Chair assured participants that both co-chairs were committed and ready to work on the TORs until consensus was reached but called on participants to refrain at this stage from introducing new ideas and paragraphs, keeping in mind that there will be time to accommodate new requests when work on the actual Guidelines and consultations begin.

The Co-Chair presented the agenda for the meeting. The agenda included an item for participants to share general comments on the TORs (Item 2) and items for discussing specific sections (Items 3 to 6). She said she would introduce each item by summarizing the main changes to the TORs from the previous version and then open the floor for comments. At the end of each item, she would summarize the comments and suggest solutions to address them. She would then present the next steps for finalizing the TORs at the end of the meeting under the last item of the agenda.

ITEM 2 – General comments from participants

Participants expressed overall satisfaction with the revised version of the TORs, which was found to be much improved over the previous version, and offered support to approve the document at the meeting, looking forward to start working on the Guidelines themselves.

Participants appreciated that the text had been revised in line with language agreed at the intergovernmental level in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other approved documents, with systematic reference to women's empowerment (and not only to gender equality). Also, its emphasis on the importance of *girls* for food security and nutrition, and the mention of

“girls” in the title; the prominence given to women’s and girls’ rights versus a focus on their roles, better reflecting the word and spirit of the CFS Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW); the explicit recognition of the importance of full and equal participation of women in agriculture; and the removal from the annex of definitions of concepts, as not all of them had been agreed through an intergovernmental process.

Participants called for “girls” to be systematically added throughout the document when mentioning “women’s empowerment”. They also underlined the importance (for inclusiveness) of sharing translated documents before such meetings.

ITEM 3 - Section A of the TORs: Background and Rationale

The Co-Chair drew participants’ attention to the fact that the text had been restructured for better flow. She noted the main changes that were introduced in this section: use of agreed language from the 2030 Agenda in referring to the crucial contribution of GEWE across its goals and targets; introduced the concept of urgency in addressing GEWE, taking into account FSN trends; mentioned the disproportionate impact of COVID 19 on women; noted the importance of GEWE for sustainable resource management, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, protection of ecosystems and conservation of biodiversity; noted that violence against women was an important manifestation of inequality; underlined the importance of women’s multiple roles in agriculture including as producers; mentioned the unbalanced and unrecognized responsibilities of women in unpaid care and domestic work; stressed the importance that all actors take joint responsibility and play an active role in achieving GEWE; and recognized power imbalances among men and women.

The revised text of this section received general support. Participants asked to give more importance to the intersectional approach; reflect the fact that not all food systems needed to be transformed although there may be room for improvement; replace “agro-systems” with “food systems”; mention women’s sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; and indicate that women are agents of changes.

ITEM 4 – Section B: Objective of the Guidelines

The Co-Chair noted that the revised text clarified that the objective of the Guidelines was to support all stakeholders, not only Member States and development partners. The main changes introduced were: a reference to women’s and girls’ rights in accordance with the MYPoW; mention of women’s and farmers’ organizations as important target groups of the Guidelines; and reference to synergy with the UN Food Systems Summit and to the UN Decade on Ecosystems Restoration given the key role of women in climate action.

Participants indicated their agreement with the revised text. It was requested to clarify that the Guidelines will contribute towards a gender-responsive approach and the promotion of innovative partnerships.

ITEM 5 – Section C: Scope of the Guidelines

The Co-Chair noted the main changes introduced in this section to address the main comments received, including: ensuring that all elements mentioned in the MYPoW were reflected; mentioning institutional constraints; recognizing the importance of economic empowerment for women; clarifying the wording in para 14.7 referring to sex- and age- disaggregated data and gender indicator and analysis with assistance of UN Women and FAO; placing more emphasis on the existence of intersecting forms of discrimination which have an impact on women’s food security and nutrition and mentioning the most important ones in para. 14.8; going back to the approved para. in the

MYPoW to refer to mandates and commitments expressed in international fora as it was difficult to address contradictory comments from participants; and deleting reference to CFS products not yet approved.

Participants requested deleting “sustainable” before “technologies” as there was no agreed definition of sustainable technologies. They mention the need to add discrimination in para. 14.5, remove the reference to sexual orientation and gender identity, adopt CEDAW language “discrimination against women” instead of “gender discrimination”; add strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable management of natural resources.

ITEM 6 - Section D: Type of instrument; Section E: Intended users; Section F: Process, tentative timeframe and budget estimate

The Co-Chair noted that para.18 had been adjusted to reflect the fact that striving for GEWE impacted everyone. Women’s and farmers’ organizations, trade unions of domestic, rural and agricultural workers were added in this paragraph under civil society in response to several comments. In para. 22, the footnote conditioning the organization of regional conferences to availability of funds was deleted and the North America region was included in the list of regional conferences.

Participants asked to add “indigenous peoples” and “farmers and small-scale producers” under Point c) and “small and medium-sized enterprises” under Point d) of para. 18.

ITEM 7 - Next steps of the process

The Co-Chair mentioned the following steps:

- The draft TORs will be revised to incorporate the changes that have been agreed during this meeting. Written comments were welcome after the meeting provided that they strictly reflected oral interventions made during the meeting.
- The final version of the draft TORs will be sent to all OEWG members by Wednesday 16 December, under a 48 hour non-objection procedure. At this stage, only comments referring to misinterpretation or factual mistakes will be addressed.
- The document will then be translated into FAO’s six official languages and submitted to CFS 47 Plenary in February 2021 for adoption.