

Written comments on the version 1 of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition

From: Canada, Permanent Mission of Canada to the Food and Agriculture Agencies of the U.N. - 8 June 2021

To: CFS Secretariat and Open Ended Working Group on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

General comments

- Canada welcomes and supports the recognition of the importance of engaging boys and men.
- Canada reiterates the importance of an inclusive approach, and of recognizing the rights of LGBTQ2+ communities throughout the text.
- Also, to ensure an intersectional and inclusive language "Women and girls in all their diversity" could be integrated in the text.
- We suggest using the term sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in lieu of gender-based violence (GBV). SGBV is the preferred terminology that is increasingly being utilized in international normative frameworks; it is more comprehensive and inclusive. Sexual violence is one of the most pervasive and one of the worst forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls.
- Biodiversity could be more strongly included and taken into consideration. Women have an important role to play in the sustainable use of biodiversity, as they are custodians of knowledge of the local seeds and plants are vital to promoting biodiversity for food and agriculture. The importance of women's role is briefly mentioned in Part 1, paragraph 5, but it could be better incorporated in Part 3.
- We welcome the strong human rights-based approach adopted in the Zero Draft, as well as the strong analysis of women's participation and empowerment. However, we suggest considering further the intersection with agronomic, labour and food consumption/preparation considerations. We suggest highlighting some of the gaps in the analysis of women's time, labour and capacity in agriculture and adding this issue as 'policy areas for discussion' under section 3.4.

Specific comments

Paragraph 5:

- We suggest the following change of language:

*[...] Measures are also required to improve women's maternal health [DEL: while recognizing women's]
[ADD: , such as by ensuring universal access to] sexual and reproductive health [ADD: -care services]
and [ADD: upholding] reproductive rights.3 Investing in women and girls and promoting gender equality
and women's and girls' empowerment are not only the right things to do to achieve food security and
nutrition, they are the smart things to do.*

- New edits reflect that maternal health can be improved by ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and upholding reproductive rights.

PART 2 – CORE PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN THE GUIDELINES

Canada generally supports the list of proposed principles, with some comments and suggestions below.

- We note the absence of consideration for **Sexual and gender-based violence**. While this issue is adequately addressed in the policy discussion (par. 102-104), it is important that it is included in the principles. The link between food security and sexual and gender-based violence is inextricable.
- We recommend adding a principle focused on sexual and gender-based violence.

Paragraph 24, “Inclusiveness and participation”

- We suggest clarifying what is meant by participation (for example participation in policy-making and/or in programmatic decisions) and also including an intersectional approach to women’s participation.

Paragraph 25, “Intersectionality and multidimensional approach”

- We recommend adding sexual orientation and gender identity in the list of forms of discrimination.

Paragraph 18, “Empowerment of women and girls”

- We suggest changing the language used - so to avoid language that could suggest that women and girls do not have the ability to control their own lives – as follow:

The Guidelines promote women’s and girls’ empowerment, recognizing them as right holders and agents of change, and recommend the necessary actions to ensure women’s and girls’ self-determination and autonomy and that they (DEL: gain) (ADD: can access) control over their own lives and [DEL: acquire the ability] [ADD: have the agency] to make strategic choices.

Paragraph 27 “Adequate financial, technical and human resources”

- We recommend adding “gender-responsive or gender-sensitive resources” in the description.

PART 3 – THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S AND GIRLS’ EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Section 3.2 “Women’s economic empowerment across food systems”, paragraph 42:

- We suggest adding **women’s capacities to use technologies or methods of food transformation** that demand significant labour and the role of mechanisation to reduce burden and labour.

Section 3.4 “Access to agri-food labour markets and decent work”, paragraph 58:

- We recommend a more explicit focus under ii (or as a stand-alone discussion) on **physical safety risks to women’s work in agriculture** from physical injury, poisoning, and means of protection.
- We suggest considering further the intersection between a human rights approach and women’s participation and empowerment with agronomic, labour and food consumption/preparation considerations. We suggest highlighting some of the gaps in the analysis of women’s time, labour and capacity in agriculture and to add this issue as ‘policy areas for discussion’.

Section 3.5 “Access to and control over natural and productive resources”

- We suggest including more analysis of the **additional caloric needs for women** to engage in a new high labour value chain or food system activity. Promoting equal participation in value-chains or access to land implicates additional labour burden, and can include labour intensive requiring significant increases of calories. Attention is given to the tools, knowledge and rights of women to participate equally in agricultural activities. In the same way, it is important to include considerations regarding women’s access to sufficient caloric energy to participate and benefit from these activities.

3.5.3 “Financial services and social capital”

- We recommend including more strongly **gender-lens investing**, and adding this issue as a policy area for discussion.
- Paragraph 83 on **climate-related agricultural risks**. We suggest expanding this paragraph to be more explicit about how these risks are amplified due to climate change beyond regular climate-related risks to agricultural production.

Section 3.6 “Access to appropriate technologies, including ICT-based, digital and agri-innovations”

- We note that there is little **analysis of the gender gaps of digital services** and power dynamics that access to digital services/information can create, including reference to unequal power relationships in marketing networks. We suggest including more analysis on the gender gaps.

Note there is no 3.7 section.

Section “3.8 Safety, security and elimination of violence and discrimination against women and girls in the context of rural and urban agri-food systems”

- As mentioned in the general comments, we suggest **using the term sexual and gender-based violence**.

Section 3.9 “Social protection and food and nutrition assistance”

- We suggest adding a consideration for the **additional caloric needs for women** to engage in higher labour activities.
- We recommend including sociological considerations regarding the impacts of promoting school feeding programmes, which reduces the responsibility of families to provide food for their school-aged children, and for women to cook and provide for their children.
- Paragraph 110: we suggest the following change of language:
[...] A comprehensive set of social policies and programs can significantly contribute towards advancement of gender equality in a society [ADD: ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights] and address the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage faced by women and girls.
- Lack of attention to sexual and reproductive health and rights is a driver for maternal mortality, poor health and disenfranchisement for many women and girls. Comprehensive social policies and policies are required to ensure universal access.