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CFS VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S AND  
GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY AND  
NUTRITION

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## Table of Contents

<b>PART 1 -</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1.	<i>Background and rationale.....</i>	3
1.2.	<i>Objectives of the guidelines .....</i>	5
1.3.	<i>Nature of the voluntary guidelines and their intended users.....</i>	5
<b>PART 2 -</b>	<b>CORE PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN THE GUIDELINES .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PART 3 -</b>	<b>THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S AND GIRLS’ EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION .....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1.	<i>Cross-cutting recommendations .....</i>	10
3.2.	<i>Women’s and girls’ food security and nutrition .....</i>	11
3.2.1.	<i>Issues and challenges .....</i>	11
3.2.2.	<i>Policies and strategic approaches .....</i>	12
3.3.	<i>Elimination of sexual and gender-based violence against women for improved food security and nutrition</i>	13
3.3.1.	<i>Issues and Challenges.....</i>	13
3.3.2.	<i>Policies and strategic approaches .....</i>	13
3.4.	<i>Recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work .....</i>	14
3.4.1.	<i>Issues and Challenges.....</i>	14
3.4.2.	<i>Policies and strategic approaches .....</i>	15
3.5.	<i>Women’s equal and meaningful participation, voice and leadership in policy- and decision-making at all levels.....</i>	15
3.5.1	<i>Issues and Challenges .....</i>	15
3.5.2.	<i>Policies and strategic approaches .....</i>	16
3.6.	<i>Women’s economic and social empowerment in the context of sustainable food systems .....</i>	16
3.6.1.	<i>Women’s access to the labor market and decent work.....</i>	16
3.6.2.	<i>Women’s involvement in food systems as producers and entrepreneurs.....</i>	17
3.6.3.	<i>Access to financial services and social capital .....</i>	18
3.6.4.	<i>Policies and strategic approaches .....</i>	19
3.7.	<i>Women’s access to and control over natural and productive resources, including land, water, fisheries and forests.....</i>	21
3.7.1.	<i>Issues and Challenges .....</i>	21
3.7.2.	<i>Policies and strategic approaches .....</i>	22
3.8.	<i>Access to education, capacity building, training, knowledge and information services .....</i>	23
3.8.1.	<i>Issues and Challenges .....</i>	23
3.8.2.	<i>Policies and strategic approaches .....</i>	25
3.9.	<i>Social protection and food and nutrition assistance .....</i>	26
3.9.1.	<i>Issues and Challenges .....</i>	26
3.9.2.	<i>Policies and Strategic Approaches.....</i>	27
3.10.	<i>Gender equality and women’s empowerment across food security and nutrition in humanitarian crises and emergencies .....</i>	27
3.10.1.	<i>Issues and challenges .....</i>	27
3.11.	<i>Policies and strategic approaches.....</i>	29

**PART 4 - PROMOTION, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE USE AND APPLICATION OF THE GUIDELINES 31**

4.1.	<i>Implementation of the guidelines .....</i>	<i>31</i>
4.2.	<i>Building and strengthening capacity for implementation.....</i>	<i>31</i>
4.3.	<i>Monitoring the use and application of the guidelines.....</i>	<i>32</i>

## **PART 1 - INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background and rationale**

1. Advancing gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment are 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 in the context of national food security.
2. In order to transform this vision into reality, at its 46th Session in October 2019, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) endorsed a policy process that will result in Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition (referred to as the "Guidelines" in this document).
3. Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment are essential to achieving all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as ensuring food systems that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. The importance of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment for sustainable development was acknowledged by the international community through the adoption of gender equality as a stand-alone goal in the 2030 Agenda (SDG5).
4. 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 in both rural and urban areas are failing to realize their right to adequate food and meet their daily food and nutrition needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected women and girls in part as a result of gender inequality and discrimination<sup>1</sup>. In this challenging global context, addressing gender inequality and ensuring women's and girls' rights is urgent and more important than ever to achieve food security and nutrition for all.
5. A large body of evidence demonstrates the positive links between gender equality and food security and nutrition. Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment is not only fundamental to the realization of human rights, it is also essential for poverty reduction, economic growth, sustainable natural resource management, mitigating and adapting to climate change, protecting ecosystems and conserving biodiversity. Supporting the empowerment of women and girls is one of the most effective ways to improve nutrition outcomes not only of women but of all family members, lowering infant mortality and reducing child malnutrition, thereby helping to break intergenerational cycles of malnutrition, with special attention to the nutritional needs of pregnant and breastfeeding women. Measures are also required to improve women's maternal health such as by ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.<sup>2</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> SOFI 2021.

<sup>2</sup> GA Resolution 70/1-2015. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994. Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, 1995. CSW 62 and 63 Agreed Conclusions.

6. Discrimination against women and girls<sup>3</sup>, pervasive gender inequality, barriers to decision-making and leaderships roles, and exposure to violence result in unequal access to food, with higher prevalence of food insecurity and malnutrition among women and girls. Rural girls face the triple disadvantage of location, gender and age. The gender gap in accessing food increased from 2018 to 2019<sup>4</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>5</sup>
7. Achievement of gender equality is positively correlated with increased production and improved efficiency in many sectors, including in agriculture in a context where small-scale farming is increasingly feminized<sup>6</sup>, whereas inequality and discrimination in access to, and control over, resources continue to undermine economic performance, leading to below-potential economic outcomes. Women play active roles as agents in food systems as farmers, producers, processors, traders, wage-workers and entrepreneurs throughout the value chains. Supporting women to claim their rights to equal access to agricultural resources would raise total agricultural output by 2.5–4 percent, and potentially reduce the number of hungry people by 12–17 percent<sup>7</sup>. Providing adequate support to women in food systems is critical for the planet to feed nine billion people in 2050 and produce 50 percent more food.<sup>8</sup>
8. Despite positive progress made over decades, gender inequality persists as women and girls continue to face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination in many areas. This manifests in unequal access to, and control over, key productive resources, assets, technologies, services, economic opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes at household, community and national levels, as well as unbalanced and unrecognized responsibilities in terms of unpaid care and domestic work - all negatively impacting various dimensions of food security: availability, access, utilization, stability, agency and sustainability, preventing women from benefitting equally from their work and creating barriers to food system inclusiveness, innovation and sustainability.
9. Gender inequality disproportionately impacts women and girls, who continue to have lower social status and economic and political power in many parts of the world. However, discriminatory barriers and limiting societal gender norms and expectations prevent everyone

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations, 1979. 'Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women' (CEDAW), Article 1 - Discrimination against women 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.*" 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.

<sup>4</sup> SOFI, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> [FAO Policy Brief on Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 and equitable policy responses in agriculture, food security and nutrition](#), FAO, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Agriculture includes crops, forestry, fisheries, livestock and aquaculture. UNGA Resolution A/RES/74/242. Paragraph 20.

<sup>7</sup> The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11. WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE - Closing the gender gap for development.

<sup>8</sup> The future of food and agriculture – Trends and challenges, FAO 2017.

from fulfilling their full potential. Thus, changing gender roles and relations towards equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities will benefit the whole society. It is crucial that all actors, including men and boys, take joint responsibility and have an active role in this process.

## **1.2. Objectives of the guidelines**

10. The objective of the Guidelines is to support Member States, development partners and other stakeholders to advance gender equality, women's and girls' rights, empowerment and leadership, as part of their efforts to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, towards the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.
11. The Guidelines will provide concrete policy guidance based on good practices and lessons learnt on gender mainstreaming<sup>9</sup>, gender transformative interventions and innovative solutions. They aim to contribute towards a gender-responsive approach, improving legal and policy frameworks, institutional arrangements, national plans and programmes, and promoting innovative partnerships and increased investments in human and financial resources that are conducive to promoting gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.
12. The Guidelines aim to foster greater policy coherence among gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment and food security and nutrition agendas, and promote mutually reinforcing policy measures. Generating and disseminating evidence on the diverse situations and experiences of women and girls, men and boys and recognizing their differentiated opportunities, constraints and outcomes in the context of food security and nutrition help to transform societal norms, raise awareness and support appropriate responses including targeted development of policies and programs.
13. The Guidelines will contribute to accelerating action by all stakeholders at all levels, including farmers' and women's organizations, to achieve the CFS vision and the goals of the 2030 Agenda, as part of the United Nations Decade of Action for Sustainable Development (2020-2030). Given the important roles that women and girls play in agriculture and food systems, 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), on Family Farming (2019-2028), and Ecosystems Restoration (2021-2030) and benefit from the "Gender Lever" work of the 2021 Food System Summit.

## **1.3. Nature of the voluntary guidelines and their intended users**

14. The Guidelines are voluntary and non-binding and should be interpreted and applied consistently with existing obligations under national and international law, and with due regard to voluntary commitments under applicable regional and international instruments. These Guidelines are intended to be interpreted and applied in accordance with national legal systems and their institutions.
15. The Voluntary Guidelines are complementary to and support national, regional and

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<sup>9</sup> Gender mainstreaming is, as defined in the ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2.

international initiatives, which aim at addressing all forms of discrimination against women and girls due to their negative impact upon food security and nutrition. In particular, CFS guidance should build upon and integrate existing instruments adopted on this topic within the context of the UN system.

16. The Guidelines are intended for all stakeholders that are involved in addressing food security and nutrition, gender equality and women's empowerment and leadership. They primarily address governments at all levels to help design and implement public policies, as their primary objective is to strengthen 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) Governments;
  - b) Intergovernmental and regional organizations, including UN agencies and bodies;
  - c) Civil society, including women's, farmers' and small-scale food producers' organizations, trade unions of domestic, rural and agricultural workers, and indigenous peoples;
  - d) Private sector, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SME);
  - e) Research organizations and universities;
  - f) Development agencies, including international financial institutions; and
  - g) Philanthropic foundations.

## **PART 2 - CORE PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN THE GUIDELINES**

17. The Guidelines are intended to be applied, consistent with the following instruments as far as each of these instruments are relevant and applicable and as far as they have been agreed, acknowledged and/or endorsed by respective Member States:
  - Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (2015);
  - ECOSOC – AC 1997/2 – Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations System;
  - Universal Declaration of Human Rights – adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948 and human rights treaties which are binding for the respective State Parties;
  - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights;
  - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
  - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), including the General Recommendation 34;
  - UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), 13 September 2007;
  - UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, 28 September 2018;
  - ILO Conventions 100, 111, 156, and 183;
  - ILO Resolution concerning Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work, 17 June 2009;
  - ILO Resolution concerning the Promotion of Gender Equality, Pay Equity and Maternity Protection, 8 December 2008;
  - Security Council Resolution 1325 and 2417;
  - Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995;
  - International Conference on Population and Development, 1994.
18. The Guidelines are intended to build upon and complement the work and mandate of other international bodies, and related guidance contained in other CFS policy products developed, including:
  - CFS Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of the national food security (2004);
  - CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security (2012);
  - CFS Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (2015);
  - CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (2015);
  - Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, 2015.
  - CFS Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (2017);
  - CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (2021);
  - All endorsed CFS policy recommendations.



The core principles that underpin the Guidelines are:

19. **Commitment to Human Rights and Realization of the Right to Adequate Food.** Achieving gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment is fundamental to the realization of human rights, and the right to adequate food. The Guidelines are consistent with, and draw on, international and regional instruments, including the SDGs that address human rights. All programmes, policies and technical assistance to strengthen gender equality through the implementation of these Guidelines should be consistent with States' existing obligations under international law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.
20. **Non-discrimination:** No one should be subject to discrimination under law and policies as well as in practice. States should ensure the equal right of women and men to the enjoyment of all human rights, while acknowledging difference between women and men and taking specific temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality when necessary<sup>10</sup>.
21. **Empowerment of women and girls.** The Guidelines rest integrally on strengthening women's and girls' empowerment, recognizing them as right holders, agents of change and leaders. They build on the positive relationship between women's and girls' empowerment and achieving food security and nutrition. They recommend actions to ensure women's and girls' self-determination and autonomy, individually and collectively, and for them to gain voice and agency, taking active and meaningful part in decision-making to control their own lives and to strengthen strategic choices affecting their lives and livelihoods.
22. **Gender transformative approaches.** The Guidelines promote the application of gender transformative approaches that challenge and tackle both the symptoms of gender inequality – including women's restricted access to land, financial services and other productive resources - and the structural causes of gender inequality entrenched in patriarchal systems and structures. Gender transformation also means identifying and creating unique opportunities for change in gender norms and power relations for sustainable food security and nutrition for all. This requires the collective engagement of all, including **men and boys**, recognizing and respecting leadership of women and girls, to strengthen joint responsibility and commitment for successful transformation of unequal power relations and discriminatory social systems, institutions and structures.
23. **Strengthening policy, legal and institutional coherence.** The Guidelines contribute to improving and strengthening policy, legal and institutional frameworks that promote coherence in mainstreaming gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment on aspects related to sustainable food systems, food security and nutrition. This will help to enhance synergies, avoid duplication, mitigate risks and prevent unintended or contradictory effects from one policy or legal area to another, including on gender equality and food security and nutrition.

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<sup>10</sup> CEDAW, Article 2 and 5: "States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, [...] to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise [...] to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women".

24. **Context-specific gender analysis and approaches.** The Guidelines promote inclusive and participatory context-specific gender analysis and actions - avoiding generalizations and stereotypes - that take into account the national, regional and local context and its impact on gender relations, roles and norms.
25. **Intersectionality and multidimensional approach.** The Guidelines recognize that women and girls often experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, affecting their food security and nutrition outcomes. The Guidelines promote a multidimensional approach that addresses these interrelated and mutually reinforcing deprivations, in particular for the indigenous communities, and marginalized and disadvantaged women most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition.
26. **Gender mainstreaming combined with targeted actions.** Alongside the transformative approach, the Guidelines support mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and interventions while recognizing that achieving gender equality requires complementing gender mainstreaming with targeted interventions that focus specifically on women and girls.
27. **Reinforcing the collection and use of gender-disaggregated data.** The Guidelines promote regular collection and use of disaggregated data according to sex, age, disability and other intersectional variables and gender-sensitive statistics and indicators, including in areas such as access to land and financial resources, and inheritance rights. Quantitative data will be complemented by qualitative data derived from women's and men's valuable current, traditional, indigenous and local knowledge. Where possible, data should be disaggregated by age, ensuring that the perspectives of the elderly and children and young people are represented. Sound evidence enables informed decision-making and the development of evidence-based M&E systems and effective responses and policies.
28. **Inclusiveness and participation in policy- and law- making.** The Guidelines promote policies and legal frameworks that are people-centered and based on the participation of all women and girls, with respect for diversity. Enabling and promoting the equal and meaningful participation of women and women-led organizations, including women's rights organizations and social movements, in marginal and vulnerable situations, including indigenous women, is not only critical to ensure that policy goals respond to their priorities, but also offers a strategic means for overcoming social exclusion.

**Multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnership.** The Guidelines recognize the importance of promoting effective multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships in food systems, based on transparent rules of engagement including safeguards for the identification and management of potential conflicts of interest.

### **PART 3 - THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION**

29. Part 3 presents CFS policy recommendations to advance gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, starting with cross-cutting recommendations that apply to all sections, and more specific policy recommendations offered under each thematic section.

#### **3.1. Cross-cutting recommendations**

30. Governments should:

(i) Strengthen the **implementation of existing obligations under national and international law**, including Human Rights Law, with due regard to voluntary commitments under applicable international and regional instruments. Nothing in the Guidelines should be read as limiting or undermining any legal obligations to which States may be subject under international law.

(ii) **Implement, strengthen or introduce legislation promoting non-discrimination and gender equality** for all women and girls in all their diversity.

(iii) Ensure **equal access to justice and legal assistance** to enforce women's rights, including on property in rural and urban areas, inheritance and financial services.

(iv) Ensure that **targeted social protection measures** – including cash and food transfers, school feeding, pensions and social welfare measures – are in place to support the poorest, including women and girls, also during times of vulnerability, emergency and protracted crisis.

(v) Address **gender discriminatory socio-cultural norms at all levels of the food system** that perpetuate gender inequality in the context of food security and nutrition, also by engaging with non-traditional actors and leaders as allies in change processes. In order to achieve gender equality, transformation needs to go from individual to systemic change and across informal to formal spheres of life.

(vi) Promote **gender mainstreaming across different relevant sectors**, including agriculture at all governmental levels as this supports women's and girls' participation and empowerment and creates impetus to address inequalities across a range of connected issues.

31. Governments, with the support of development partners and other relevant stakeholders, should:

(i) **Design and implement interventions** based on country-specific and country-owned gender inclusive and participatory analysis and approaches.

(ii) Ensure that **men and boys are engaged as allies and participants** in gender transformative processes and strategies. Their active involvement is essential for successful transformation of unequal power relations and discriminatory social systems, institutions and structures. Promote positive masculinity and give more visibility to positive behaviours that promote gender equality.

(iii) Collect and use **gender quantitative and qualitative data disaggregated by age, disability and other variables**, which takes into account the national, regional and local context and its impact on gender relations, roles and norms and that reflects intersectional forms of discrimination where possible.

(iv) Promote **more sustainable gender equitable food systems** such as those based on agro-ecological and other innovative approaches, and approaches that enable more local ownership and control over production, and support the production of appropriate, healthy, affordable foods.

(v) Ensure **adequate financial, technical and human resources**, supported by political commitment and public policies that promote an enabling environment to **generate social, economic and cultural changes** with specific gender-transformative policies, programmes and institutions. Measures to support gender-responsive budgeting should be put in place and implemented where possible.

### **3.2. Women's and girls' food security and nutrition**

#### **3.2.1. Issues and challenges**

##### ***Gender inequitable access to and distribution of nutritious food***

32. Women and girls are more likely to suffer from different forms of malnutrition and overnutrition than men and boys, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity, due to a combination of social, economic and biological factors. Therefore, policies and inter-sectoral interventions to support women's and girls' specific nutritional needs are of critical importance.
33. Social and economic inequalities between men and women often stand in the way of good nutrition, limiting women's access to healthy diets. These include, for example, women's lack of control over the household income and food purchases, unequal intra-household distribution of food, poor labour conditions and women's heavy work burden and lack of access to health services, and lack of access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.
34. Gender inequalities and discriminatory socio-cultural norms also affect women's and girls' access to nutritious food. These inequalities often play out through accepted and unquestioned cultural practices.
35. Women often play a critical role as guardians of food security in the household, responsible for purchasing or growing food for consumption and preparing meals for their families as an often unrecognized aspect of unpaid care work. In the context of scarcity due to factors such as climate-related drought or rising food prices, women tend to prioritize the food needs of their children and family members, sometimes reducing their own daily food intake, with a detrimental impact on their own nutritional status.

##### ***Women's and girls' specific nutritional needs throughout the life cycle***

36. Women's nutritional needs vary depending on their life course and labour activities, with for instance special needs in iron and folic acid, micronutrients like iron and iodine for pregnant women and adolescent girls.

37. Gender discriminatory norms prevailing in certain communities and societies discriminate adolescent girls and women from their right to access, demand and consume healthy diets. This predisposes them to increased risk for anemia, undernutrition and overweight and obesity.
38. Women's own nutritional status, especially during pregnancy and breastfeeding, impacts the nutritional status of their child. Women have additional nutritional needs, in quantity and quality, when pregnant or breastfeeding and when they engage in physically demanding work such as farm labour.

***Empowering women and girls for improved food security and nutrition***

39. Initiatives that promote gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment can significantly improve nutrition and well-being for the entire household. There is evidence that women's and girls' empowerment is a pathway to improved nutrition due to positive links between women's empowerment and child and maternal health.
40. While some aspects of the decisions on food production, procurement, and preparation of food may be part of women's domain and part of their traditional roles as mothers and caregivers, in many societies some of the key decisions are predominantly male-dominated due to social norms and structural inequality. Women should be in a position to make decisions over their own nutrition and be able to contribute to the improvement of their families' nutrition. This means improving women's access to resources, ensuring they have access to knowledge on nutrition and healthy diets, and addressing the root causes of gender norms that can undermine their participation in household decision-making.
41. Conventional approaches to nutrition education tend to reinforce existing gender roles, focusing on women's roles as mothers and caregivers of young children. To address this, nutrition education programs must recognize that care work should be shared, and that men must also play a role in ensuring adequate nutrition for their families. This means engaging both women and men in nutrition education programmes, but it is also vital to challenge masculine gender norms that may affect men's willingness to take on these shared roles.

**3.2.2. Policies and strategic approaches**

42. Governments, with the support of development partners and other relevant stakeholders, should:
  - (i) **Address gender discriminatory socio-cultural norms that perpetuate women's and girls' food insecurity and malnutrition.** Participatory research should be conducted to identify and better understand these norms, which are often so normalized as to go unquestioned and taken for granted.
  - (ii) **Design and implement policies and interventions that acknowledge women and girls' specific nutritional needs** linked to their life course.
  - (iii) **Ensure adequate nutrition knowledge for women, men and children** to strengthen ability to make strategic choices over their own and their family's healthy diets and good nutrition.

### **3.3. Elimination of sexual and gender-based violence against women for improved food security and nutrition**

#### **3.3.1. Issues and Challenges**

43. Gender-based violence (GBV) – whether physical, sexual, psychological or economic - is a universal problem. Food insecurity and GBV are linked in multiple ways. Changes in food security status can disrupt or intensify established or entrenched power imbalances between women and men and, thus, can drive increases in GBV in relationships, households and communities. Pressures on men to be family providers in time of food scarcity and/or rising prices may also fuel aggression and domestic violence. Intersectional factors can intensify the risk of sexual and GBV. Defenders of human rights are often at heightened risk of violence.
44. Humanitarian crises, including those resulting from climate change, conflicts, disasters and pandemics often exacerbate underlying gender inequality, vulnerabilities and the risks of sexual and gender-based violence. For example, COVID-19 and the associated social and economic stress has resulted in a dramatic rise in domestic violence cases globally. Women and girls with disabilities as well as women and girls from marginalized indigenous groups are often at heightened risk of violence and remain excluded from basic services and social support. Therefore, attention should be paid to preventing and addressing violence from the very onset of crises, with targeted approaches for survivors of violence, and special attention to the most disadvantaged.
45. Rural women and girls often face gender-based violence in carrying out their daily responsibilities, such as collecting water and fuelwood. The increasing scarcity of these resources due to over-exploitation, often in the context of large-scale unsustainable food production practices climate change, de-forestation and other factors such as privatization of water sources means that women and often girls are obliged to travel ever longer distances, putting them at higher risk of violence.
46. Sexual and gender-based violence severely undermines women's and girls' physical, emotional and mental health, dignity and well-being. Yet, it often remains shrouded in a culture of silence. It affects primarily women and girls in their productive and reproductive years, compromising their capacity to take advantage of opportunities to further contribute to food security and nutrition, as earners and caregivers, due to illness, injury and stigma.

#### **3.3.2. Policies and strategic approaches**

47. Governments, with the support of development partners and other relevant stakeholders, should **prevent and support the elimination all forms of violence against women and girls** including harmful practices, in the context of food security and nutrition by:
  - (i) **Implementing existing relevant international commitments**, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
  - (ii) **Implementing and strengthening existing national legislation and introducing new legislation where needed.**
  - (iii) **Ensuring measures and services are in place for supporting and protecting survivors of GBV from further abuse**, as well as for dealing effectively with perpetrators

and investing in preventive measures.

(iv) **Introducing measures to ensure the security and safety of women and girls in crisis contexts**, promoting their protection, dignity and integrity, with special attention to women and girls at heightened risk of violence, in particular women and girls with disabilities.

(v) **Improving reporting mechanisms for GBV and sexual harassment.**

(vi) **Promoting changes in social norms and stereotypes** that generate and perpetuate sexual and gender-based violence, promoting positive masculinities and elimination of harmful practices.

(vii) **Engaging men and boys** as key participants in these gender transformative processes.

(viii) **Promoting public awareness of GBV, sexual harassment and online bullying**, and taking a zero-tolerance attitude to these forms of violence.

### **3.4. Recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work**

#### **3.4.1. Issues and Challenges**

48. Unpaid care and domestic work are critical to food security and nutrition. This work includes the preparation of food for the family, feeding and caring for children, the elderly and sick members in the household and community, and many other activities essential to human well-being and society as a whole. These unpaid care-related activities are often not recognized despite the reality that economies depend on them. Activities often undertaken by women relating to food production, such as planting, irrigation and harvesting crops and processing fish, are also often unpaid and unrecognized despite their enormous economic and social value.
49. However, this work is often not equally shared. On average, women do nearly three times as much unpaid work as men. It hampers women's participation in paid activities in the labour market and decision-making processes.
50. Often the pressure on women to undertake unpaid care and domestic work in addition to paid work is a key driver of the shift away from traditional and often relatively healthier diets, to more convenient but highly processed food due to their non-perishability and cutting of food preparation time.
51. In many low-income countries and in the context of limited infrastructure, rural women and girls spend an enormous amount of time accessing water and fuel wood for domestic and agricultural use.<sup>11</sup> Such time-consuming chores not only keep girls away from school, but many girls also face the double burden of performing household chores within their own households, combined with agricultural activities, frequently working more hours than boys. Community attitudes, such as not valuing girls' education and not considering household chores as work, pose additional challenges to improve the situation of girls, especially in

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<sup>11</sup> Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2017, WHO and UNICEF, 2017  
<https://www.unicef.org/media/55276/file/Progress%20on%20drinking%20water,%20sanitation%20and%20hygiene%202019%20.pdf>.

rural areas.

### 3.4.2. Policies and strategic approaches

52. Governments should:

(i) Recognize and value **reproductive and productive unpaid care work** by counting and including it in **national statistics**.

(ii) Reduce unpaid work through **public investments in welfare, social protection, provision of state-funded or subsidized child and elder care services, rural infrastructure** (including the improvement of water supply, sanitation and hygiene facilities and access to electricity).

(iii) Fund the provision of **labour-saving technologies for domestic work as well as agricultural and aquatic food production**.

(iv) Ensure more **flexible working arrangements in workplaces and decision-making spaces**, through the provision and implementation of effective gender policies which should reflect ILO standards.

53. Governments, with the support of development partners, civil society, private sector and other relevant stakeholders, should:

(i) Address gender norms with respect to the **distribution of unpaid care and domestic work**, and promoting sharing of unpaid care and domestic work more equally between women and men within the family.

(ii) Promote the provision and take up of **appropriate maternity, paternity and shared parental leave**.

### 3.5. Women's equal and meaningful participation, voice and leadership in policy- and decision-making at all levels

#### 3.5.1. Issues and Challenges

54. Globally, the participation of women in high-level decision-making bodies on food security and nutrition in public and private sectors has increased but remains low in many countries. At the household level, key decisions related to food security and nutrition, such as household spending patterns on food, and women's engagement in income-generating activities and participation in producer and community associations – can be affected by unequal power relations, gender roles and social norms, and discriminatory practices. Rural women in particular face many obstacles, due to heavy workload and the persistence of traditional views about women's and men's roles in society.

55. Evidence indicates that women's decision-making power relating to household spending is associated with healthier diets and better nutrition outcomes for women themselves and for other family members.<sup>12</sup> When women have more control over the family income, it is more

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<sup>12</sup> [Is women's empowerment a pathway to improving child nutrition outcomes in a nutrition-sensitive agriculture program?](#), IFPRI, 2019.



likely to be spent on food and well-being for their children. However, unequal gender relations and discriminatory practices and patriarchal socio-cultural norms means that key household-level decisions related to food security and nutrition are made by men. These challenges can be more pronounced for women in rural communities but also apply to women in urban settings.

56. Violence and discrimination against women and girls represent serious barriers to women's leadership and full participation in public life. Factors that include limited access to education, negative social attitudes about female leaders and the burden of unpaid care and domestic work, prevent women from realizing their full potential and participating fully in society.

### **3.5.2. Policies and strategic approaches**

57. Governments should:
  - (i) **Introduce and apply positive discrimination measures, such as gender quotas** to ensure women's representation in leadership positions in political parties, public and private sectors, access to education and participation in community organizations.
  - (ii) Ensure the full **engagement and participation of women and their organizations** in all dimensions of policy design and programmatic decisions for food security and nutrition, including agroecological and innovative approaches, supporting women's leadership through training and capacity building.
  - (iii) **Mobilize young women** to ensure they complete their education in order to be able to participate in decision-making at various levels.
58. Governments, with the support of development partners and other relevant stakeholders, should:
  - (i) Promote and fund **leadership training** for women and girls.
  - (ii) **Strengthen women's organizations and women's collective action.** The importance of self-association and the role of social movements to promote gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment in decision-making at all levels is recognized. Support should include direct funding for women's rights organizations at both the local, national, and regional levels. Supporting women's rights organizations to take leadership roles in high-level food security and nutrition – and related processes – is critical to ensuring women's needs and expectations inform the policies and programs that affect them most.
  - (iii) **Address discriminatory gender norms and attitudes**, including among male leaders through awareness raising, training and introduction of gender policies and action plans.

## **3.6. Women's economic and social empowerment in the context of sustainable food systems**

### **3.6.1. Women's access to the labor market and decent work**

#### ***Issues and challenges***

59. Access to secure employment in conditions of dignity and safety is vital to human welfare

and well-being and is a key contributor to food security and nutrition. Women are more likely than men to struggle to find adequately paid employment in the formal sector. This is due to multiple factors, including gender-based discrimination among employers, the lack of affordable child or elderly care facilities, and limitations on their mobility and decision-making power in many contexts. Often women are subject to a gender wage gap, earning less than men for the same or similar work. Women can be vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation, gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace, especially when their rights are undermined by the lack of a formal contract.<sup>13</sup> In rural areas, women are more likely to be employed in labor-intensive tasks, earning lower wages than men, and to be paid a piece rate than a daily wage.

60. Many agricultural workers - including women – are affected by the lack of adequate health and safety measures, which may lead to higher rates of fatal accidents, injuries and diseases. Agriculture is one of the most hazardous occupations, involving exposure to agrochemicals, machines and equipment and livestock. Women often lack access to social protection systems and to information about their rights as employees.
61. Gender-biased social norms, laws and practices often limit women’s participation in workers’ and producers’ organizations and in organized labour institutions such as trade unions.
62. Migrants including migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees, are more vulnerable to severe labour exploitation and other forms of abuse. Female migrants are particularly vulnerable due to gender-based discrimination, multiple and intersecting forms of vulnerability and violence.

### **3.6.2. Women’s involvement in food systems as producers and entrepreneurs**

#### ***Issues and Challenges***

63. Women are actively engaged across food systems. They comprise up to 80 percent of rural producers in some countries, but these roles are too often unpaid and unrecognized, and female farmers, pastoralists and women engaged in fisheries face constraints to full participation in agricultural value chains. Often these systems are male-dominated and oriented towards large-scale agri-production rather than the small-scale farming in which female farmers tend to engage, partly because of their lack of access to productive resources such as land, water and credit, lack of investment capital; lack of access to transport and lack of business knowledge. The structures and processes implicit in agricultural and fishery value chains are also often gender blind, excluding women.
64. As small-scale female producers move into more intensified agricultural systems the gender gap widens. Agricultural intensification is more capital intensive and requires access to productive assets, services, technology, crop diversification and markets which are more challenging for women.
65. Women’s engagement in value-adding food processing activities is constrained by lack of financial services, knowledge and advisory services, appropriate technology, and training that can build women’s technical capacity as well as leadership and entrepreneurship skills in

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<sup>13</sup> ILO C190 on the right to a workplace free from violence and harassment (ILO Convention, 2019).

food systems. Socio-cultural factors often add to the problem by restricting women's mobility, which reduces their ability to access lucrative markets.

66. Food produced from crops managed by women is often retained for household consumption, offering marginal income opportunities. Moreover, as agricultural produce moves from farm to informal market, evidence indicates that women often lose control and opportunities for income generation along value adding processes. Furthermore, even if women often grow high-value horticultural crops, such as vegetables for urban centers, lack of packing materials, cold chains and transportation result in high losses and low earnings.
67. A key aspect of women's access to physical and other necessary complementary resources and services are determined by their inclusion in networks and their social capital. Producer groups, agricultural extension agents, and transportation are often more available to men than women. Agricultural extension agents, who often facilitate access to markets and services, are often male and less likely to make these connections for women farmers.
68. Although the human rights of women are legally enshrined at the international level in the CEDAW, women still face many legal constraints that restrict their ability to access and benefit from productive resources including land and opportunities. Equal legal rights are usually associated with better and more secure income in the labor market for women and consequently with higher spending on food and nutrition for themselves and children.<sup>14</sup>
69. Gender inequality in food systems reduces women's and girls' ability to reach their full potential. It limits women's access to resources, affecting productivity and women's ability to manage risks; women's participation and voice in farmer groups; women's access to, as well as time and energy for, remunerated activities, constraining their contribution to their family's income.
70. Promoting gender-equitable and sustainable food systems and value chains requires an accurate understanding of existing gender relations and men's and women's roles, responsibilities, bargaining power, distribution of resources, labour allocation, decision-making. It also requires an understanding of the benefits men and women derive from agriculture and food production, including income, combined with effective programme design to address the challenges women face for economic empowerment. Improving interventions requires applying a gender analysis with quality data and information throughout the value chains, in a specific legal, social, environmental and cultural context, focusing on production, processing, storage, transportation, distribution processes and retail from a gender perspective. These analyses should also take into account intersectional forms of disadvantage and exclusion.

### **3.6.3. Access to financial services and social capital**

#### ***Issues and Challenges***

71. Lack of financial capital is a significant constraint to women's entrepreneurial activities and engagement all along the food system and value chains, from investment in land to agri-food businesses. Constraints to women's access to financial services such as credit and insurance

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<sup>14</sup> [Resource guide on Gender issues in employment and labour market policies - Working towards women's economic empowerment and gender equality](#), ILO, 2014.

include restricted access to assets, including land and property, that could be used as collateral for loans; restricted availability of loan products for small and micro-businesses; gender blindness and discrimination in statutory and customary laws; and patriarchal norms that prevent women from developing and growing their enterprises and productivity.

72. Women often have limited knowledge of, and access to, financial services<sup>15</sup>, constraining their use of natural and productive resources. When they do have access, they face more restrictive collateral requirements, shorter maturity of loans, and higher interest rates than men. Even when requirements are the same, they are often unable to fulfill them.
73. Lack of financial inclusion for women also limits their ability to access financing for climate-related disaster risk management and recovery including agricultural insurance. Women are also often more exposed to climate-related agricultural risks, but usually lack resources to offset these shocks.
74. Female producers need access to capacity building in financial literacy as well as information on financial services and products. They also need improved access to markets, facilitated by financial services that are tailored to their specific needs and circumstances, to improve productivity and translate it into improved incomes and livelihoods, which in turn support food security and nutrition and wellbeing of their families, especially children.
75. Developing networks for women and women's organizations, such as cooperative models, can contribute to real change towards financial autonomy of women, by enabling rural women to share experiences, knowledge and challenges, fostering empowerment and offering opportunities for employment, enhanced livelihoods and access to productive resources and services. These networks can also grow into organized structures that enable effective collective bargaining with suppliers and retailers to get better services, generating profits for their farm and rural enterprises.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.6.4. Policies and strategic approaches

#### *Women's access to the labour market and decent work*

76. Governments should:
  - (i) **Implement the ILO Conventions** as an essential instrument to ensure gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment and respect for human rights within the workplace.
  - (ii) **Ensure there is a solid legal framework in place establishing the right to decent work and safeguarding key principles** such as equal pay for work of equal value, and safe working conditions, including the prohibition of harassment. This should include measures to promote flexible work arrangements and childcare facilities, enabling both women and men to carry out equal care responsibilities while undertaking paid employment.
77. Governments, with the support of the private sector and other relevant stakeholders, should:
  - (i) Introduce or strengthen **policy interventions across sectors** to promote decent work, living wages, and improvement of working conditions in food systems for adult women and

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<sup>15</sup> [Gender and financial inclusion](#), ILO, 2018; [Financial inclusion](#), World Bank, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> [Guideline advancing gender equality the co-operative way](#), ILO, 2015.

young women of working age, with attention for instance to safety and social protection, eliminating gender-specific barriers and discrimination.

(ii) **Promote decent work in public and private sectors** through workplace policies and other measures such as access to social protection systems.

***Women's involvement in food systems as producers and entrepreneurs***

78. Governments should:

(i) Implement and/or strengthen **legal frameworks** to prevent and address violence and harassment in the workplace, for the redistribution of unpaid domestic and care work, and for equal pay and protection of women's labour rights, including for women migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

79. Governments, with the support of private sector and other relevant stakeholders, should:

(i) Support **women's transition from informal to formal economy** where appropriate, reducing labour market segregation.

(ii) **Promote policies that allow women equal control in value chains** and equal benefit from profits.

(iii) Address **social norms that condition women's involvement in agricultural investments, value chains and access to markets**.

(iv) Enable the **participation of women in agricultural investments as business actors**, including in small-scale agro-industrialization, in collaboration with other actors such as private enterprises, through cooperatives and producer organizations, providing an enabling environment.

(v) Promote **investments in technologies, rural infrastructure, transport and women's specific activities** (across food systems and along value chains) that support women's activities and strengthen women's capacities to use technologies or methods that reduce their work burden.

***Access to financial services and social capital***

80. Governments, with the support of private sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholders, should:

(i) **Address legal barriers, gender norms and gender biases** for women's financial inclusion. For example, improve women's access to credit and bank accounts, including **specific financial programmes for rural female entrepreneurs**, with more flexible collateral requirements, alternative data to assess credit risk, and customized disbursement schedules that fit women's crop and cash flow needs.

(ii) Facilitate **women's participation in social and economic networks, including cooperatives**, with recognition and support to local traditional financial systems familiar to women, and attention to effective participation and leadership of women when in mixed networks.

(iii) **Address discriminatory social norms** that negatively affect women's potential

involvement in agricultural investments and agricultural value chains and markets.

(iv) **Invest in technologies and rural infrastructure (including by creating local, affordable transport links)** to support the productive activities of women – including female farmers.

### **3.7. Women's access to and control over natural and productive resources, including land<sup>17</sup>, water, fisheries and forests**

#### **3.7.1. Issues and Challenges**

81. Around the world, land serves as a foundation for security, shelter, income and livelihoods. However, rights to land are not equitably distributed and women encounter persistent barriers to land rights in over half the countries in the world, despite laws and policies that enshrine those rights. The poorest people, including women, are often affected by land grabbing and often do not have the power or resources to fight these practices. In some cases, this is because of differences between statutory and customary or traditional laws, which often do not recognize women's rights to own land or property. In many countries women also lack rights to aquatic resources and water.
82. Climate-induced weather-related events have severe impacts on the availability of natural resources, which will directly affect women, for example by increasing the time they need to use for fetching water and fuelwood. The impacts of climate change on women and men can differ, due to existing gender inequality and multidimensional factors and can be more pronounced for rural communities and indigenous peoples.
83. When climate-related disasters result in male outmigration, women are obliged to assume additional on-farm responsibilities without commensurate resources and with limited decision-making power over land - often not legally registered in their name - limiting their ability to request government subsidies or financial services.
84. Women's access to water is crucial for agriculture, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture production and for household and domestic purposes. Fisheries and aquaculture account for 10-12 percent of global livelihoods and are key contributors to food security and nutrition.<sup>18</sup> Women represent up to half of the labor force in aquaculture, largely involved in processing and trading, but women receive lower labor returns and income than men.
85. Forests, and their resources are used differently by women and men. Men's activities are often driven by commercial objectives, including timber extraction. Women's activities are more diverse, often linked to the household well-being, including collecting fuelwood for domestic use, and a range of non-timber forest products, e.g. food and medicine for their family and fodder for livestock. Women often play a key role in Forest User Groups, yet are not involved in decision-making about forest management and the sustainable use of forest resources. This means that women's voices are not being heard and that there are missed opportunities with regard to women's contribution to preserving and protecting forests in the face of deforestation and the stripping of other natural resources. There is also untapped

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<sup>17</sup> [CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security](#), CFS, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> [The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture](#) 2020. Sustainability in action, FAO, 2020.

potential for women's economic empowerment – for example engaging women in transforming and marketing non-timber forest products – which in turn can contribute to sustainable economic growth.

86. The differential uses of land, water, fisheries, trees and forestry resources by men and women mean they often have specialized knowledge: for example, rural women are often custodians of knowledge of the local seeds and plants that are vital for food and agriculture. They also often understand effective approaches to climate adaptation and climate-related disaster mitigation. Indigenous peoples also often have very deep knowledge of flora and fauna in natural sites. Failure to take into account knowledge of women and indigenous peoples in land, water, fisheries, and forestry policy and planning can lead to poor outcomes, including loss of biodiversity, water pollution, soil degradation, loss of forest cover, and a failure to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
87. Men and women often grow different crops and/or different varieties and have different uses for the crops they grow. Typically, breeding and crop management programs largely work with male farmers and tend to focus on improving traits and management of commercial crops mostly managed by men. Women's priorities in breeding programs are rarely considered.
88. Livestock, poultry and farmed fish are key assets for rural households, often representing a wealth accumulation instrument, a buffer in case of crisis, as well as a key nutrient source for households. Depending on the cultural context, both women and men participate in the animal care, with women often taking more prominent role in the care of small livestock, poultry and farmed fish.
89. Most farm implements, including mechanized tools, have been designed based on the height, strength and body type of men and are inappropriate for use by, or even harmful to, women. Moreover, mechanization for women's activities in drying, storage and processing may be unavailable.
90. Agroecological and other innovative approaches could improve the sustainability and inclusiveness of agriculture, fisheries and food systems because of their holistic approach and emphasis on equity, embracing the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the food systems and contributing to the local production and availability of affordable, healthy, culturally appropriate food.
91. Special attention should be paid to the legitimate tenure rights of Indigenous Peoples, and to the importance of free, prior and informed consent, critical for their food security, livelihoods and culture.

### **3.7.2. Policies and strategic approaches**

92. Governments should:
  - (i) **Implement and strengthen existing legislation or introduce new legislation** to promote women's and girls' equal access to resources such as land, including through inheritance.
  - (ii) **Ensure equal and secured tenure rights and access to land, water, fisheries and forests for women and men – including Indigenous Peoples** – independent of women's civil and marital status. This should be formalized through the provision of land tenure

certificates. Girls require equal rights to inheritance, including in customary and faith-based inheritance regimes.

(iii) **Address the damaging practice of land grabbing from the poorest rural producers, who are often women**, and ensure the provision of legal support to enable farmers to fight these practices, as well as the introduction of governmental land distribution strategies to promote equitable control over land.

(iv) Ensure the **inclusion of women and girls in the development of Emergency Preparedness and Response Programmes (EPRP) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies**.

93. Governments, with the support of development partners and other relevant stakeholders, should:

(i) Recognize and **address tensions between statutory and customary or religious laws** in sensitive ways – for example by engaging local chiefs and religious leaders.

(ii) Advance **knowledge on land tenure as well as user rights** in fisheries as a crucial step towards achieving gender equitable governance of fisheries and attaining food and nutrition security and livelihood benefits.

(iii) Ensure **women's participation, including indigenous women, in the management and governance** of natural resources at all levels, including of customary institutions, recognizing the importance of traditional knowledge and local crops.

(iv) Promote **adapted and appropriate practices, approaches, tools, knowledge and technologies for women across the food system** in particular small-scale food producers.

(v) **Promote the equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women in all aspects of climate and environmental policy formulation and actions at all levels**, including at the local, national, regional and international processes.

### **3.8. Access to education, capacity building, training, knowledge and information services**

#### **3.8.1. Issues and Challenges**

##### ***Women's and Girls' Access to formal education***

94. Women's and girls' education is a strategic development priority. Yet, persistent inequality in education continue to affect the lives of millions of women and girls worldwide. Enrollment figures fail to reflect school drop-out rates among girls due to factors that include early marriage and poverty.

95. Women with more years of schooling tend to be more informed about nutrition and adopt healthier dietary practices for themselves and their families. Evidence indicates that literacy and school attendance correlates with greater understanding of nutrition, breastfeeding, better farming practices and improved crop production methods, including increased likelihood of using improved crop varieties and fertilizers. Literacy and schooling levels increase women's ability to access information and knowledge, enhancing their capacity to participate in the formal labour market and in decision-making. Literate farmers also have greater negotiating



capacity to deal with actors in the agriculture value chains. Every additional year of primary school increases girls' eventual wages by 10-20 percent.<sup>19</sup> All these factors combined can help lift households, communities, and countries out of poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

96. Girls' education is associated with future economic and social prospects and lower fertility rates, as well as with improved food security and nutrition. However, while significant progress has been made in reducing the gender gap in education, large differences remain between rural and urban areas, leaving many rural girls in more disadvantaged positions. Obstacles to girls' education include gender-discriminatory stereotypes and social norms, early marriage and pregnancy, discriminatory laws and policies, poverty and gender-blind school facilities such as a lack of female bathrooms. The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a very negative impact on girls' education and educational equality.<sup>20</sup>
97. The often lower percentage of women in higher agricultural education translates into a limited pool of available women extensionists, agricultural technicians, researchers, planners and policy makers. Agricultural researchers are critical to improving farm productivity for all farmers, and gender balance among them is key to ensuring that both women and men's farming challenges are recognized. Yet, in many countries, female agricultural researchers are scarce. Female graduates from post-secondary and tertiary education – including from technical and vocational colleges – would be instrumental in bringing women's perspectives and knowledge to institutions across food systems. Women's increased access to technical and vocational education and training will also positively impact productivity, including in the agricultural and fisheries sectors.

### ***Women's and Girls' Access to advisory and extension services***

98. Capacity building, training, knowledge and access to information are crucial tools for female producers, workers, entrepreneurs, traders and worker to make informed choices. Agricultural extension services are vital for supporting farmer's education, improve the dissemination of agricultural information and increase productivity, particularly for small-scale food producers. However, female farmers, in particular small-scale food producers, receive little direct agricultural extension provision.<sup>21</sup> In addition, women may not have sufficient and timely access to climate-related information and climate services. This is linked to the failure to recognize their critical roles as agricultural producers. Women also often have limited access to market information, affecting their ability to make informed trading choices, realizing their potential as producers, entrepreneurs and traders.

### ***Women's and Girls' Access to appropriate ICT-based, digital and innovative technologies***

99. Access to ICT varies significantly across regions and between women and men. Women located in rural or remote areas experience a triple (digital, gender and rural) discrimination, facing significant barriers in access and use of digital technologies, due to unaffordability, low digital literacy and social norms. The gender gap in access to ICT needs to be urgently addressed if the benefits of ICT to gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment are to be achieved. However, it is vital to ensure that new technologies do not re-entrench or

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<sup>19</sup> [UNICEF](#), 2011.

<sup>20</sup> [Gender gap in primary school enrolment halved over past 25 years](#), UNESCO, 2020

<sup>21</sup> [The Gender and Rural Advisory Services Assessment Tool](#), FAO, 2018.

worsen existing inequalities. ICT should be viewed as a means rather than an end in itself. In some remote areas where there is lack of access to electricity, ICT may not be appropriate or useful.

100. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and digital technologies and solutions can benefit women in many ways. Women can gain access to knowledge and capacity building opportunities, credit and new economic and employment opportunities through online information resources, ICT and targeted digital content can help female entrepreneurs in rural and remote communities as well as in urban centres to achieve access to new markets and consumers. ICTs can also facilitate cash transfers and mediate secure transactions, including the receipt of remittances and purchase of inputs.
101. Online access means that women can receive crucial information that they would not access otherwise for example on issues relating to health care or agriculture, including pricing of the produce, inputs and early warning messages related to weather conditions. However, the knowledge gained through use of ICT cannot replace agriculture advisory services.
102. It is important to address the structural barriers that underpin the digital gender divide and support an inclusive and fair digital transformation, bringing benefits to all, while protecting human rights, both online and offline, and ensuring a safe and secure cyber space, and data protection.

### **3.8.2. Policies and strategic approaches**

#### ***Women's and girls' access to formal education***

103. Governments should:
  - (i) Implement, strengthen or introduce **new legislation promoting gender equitable access to education for all.**
  - (ii) **Foster gender-transformative education systems, resources and processes** to promote gender equality and deliver more equitable education results for girls and boys through safe and healthy learning environments.
  - (iii) **Eliminate barriers and prioritize efforts to support girls' retention in primary school and entry to secondary school and tertiary education, including social protection measures such as school feeding,**
  - (iv) Promote **female literacy programmes** that integrate women's literacy classes into agriculture and nutrition programmes.
104. Governments, with the support of development partners and other relevant stakeholders, should:
  - (i) **Address social norms** that perpetuate gender inequality in education, capacity building, training, knowledge access and generation, and information, including with the support of media promoting images and programs which challenge and expand gender social norms. This also means ensuring that school curricula and educational materials do not reinforce gender stereotypes.
  - (ii) **Promote life skills training** that includes negotiation skills, public speaking skills and

conflict resolution to improve girls and women's agency.

***Women's and Girls' access to advisory and extension services***

105. Governments, with the support of development partners and other relevant stakeholders, should **support gender-responsive and transformative rural advisory services, training and research** that consider women's specific needs and constraints, and are accessible to all.

***Women's and Girls' Access to appropriate ICT-based, digital and innovative technologies***

106. Governments, with the support of development partners and other relevant stakeholders, should:
- (i) **Increase girls and women's access to affordable, accessible, safe and secure digital connectivity**, reaching out to rural and remote areas, with the aim of closing the digital gender gap.
  - (ii) **Promote digital literacy for women and girls in education**, addressing the gender norms and stereotypes that undermine women's and girls' access to digital technologies.
  - (iii) **Design agri-tech and other digital platforms for female entrepreneurs and tools with equal participation of men and women** as co-designers to address and recognize women's and girls' needs, preferences, opportunities and constraints.

### **3.9. Social protection and food and nutrition assistance**

#### **3.9.1. Issues and Challenges**

107. Shock-responsive social protection programs can support communities, households and individuals to prevent poverty, overcome social exclusion and manage risks in relation to different types of shocks and constraints throughout their life course. In many households, the shock absorbers are women, who respond to the challenging situation by using different coping strategies, for example by selling their assets, reducing their own food consumption, to protect the food security of their children and other family members.
108. Social protection programs can also address risks faced by women and girls over their life course and support them with measures including, cash or food transfers in times of crisis, school feeding, child and family support payments, maternity protection and paid parental leave, employment injury benefits, sickness and health protection, including universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights<sup>22</sup>. Social protection instruments can also include pensions, unemployment insurance, and labor market and livelihood enhancement interventions.
109. A comprehensive set of social policies and programs can significantly contribute towards the advancement of gender equality, providing a lever for addressing the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage faced by women and girls.
110. Social protection programmes can have direct positive impacts on food security and nutrition by giving access to more food and healthier diets nutrition for women and their families, particularly in times of crisis. The first 1,000 days are critical for children's nutrition. Therefore, interventions that support a healthy pregnancy, safe childbirth, exclusive

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<sup>22</sup> [UNGA Resolution A/RES/74/2](#), UNGA, October 2019.

breastfeeding for 6 months and diversified nutritious complementary feeding are crucial.

111. School feeding, one of the most common social protection programmes, incentivizes parents and caregivers to send children, especially girls, to school. Nutritious and healthy school meals can improve students' growth, development, concentration and, consequently, learning; when delivered with nutrition education, they can lead to a lifetime of healthier diet choices. When school food is sourced from local smallholder farmers/food producers, especially women farmers/producers, it can foster increases in local production.
112. Social protection should be regarded as a universal human right, rather than only an emergency response to a situation of crisis or an act of charity. It should be enshrined in domestic legislation as a set of permanent entitlements defining individuals as rights-holders and guaranteeing them access to independent claims mechanisms if they are denied the benefits for which they qualify.

### **3.9.2. Policies and Strategic Approaches**

113. Governments should:
  - (i) **Ensure access to adequate social protection ensured through a comprehensive legal framework.** Social protection programmes should be comprehensive and accessible by all who need them throughout their life course. They should also be agile enough to **respond to shocks**, paying attention to women's and girls' special needs, including nutritional needs.
  - (ii) Ensure social protection programmes address **women's and girls' specific life course transitions and risks and the diversity of women's experiences**, informed by relevant, up to date sex- and age- disaggregated data.
  - (iii) Provide **specific financial investments and allocations** to support long-term social protection programs.
114. Governments, with the support of development partners and other relevant stakeholders, should:
  - (i) Enable women and men to participate equally in decision-making on social protection, including in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and policies.
  - (ii) **Enhance women's control** of food in food distributions by making women the household food entitlement holder.

## **3.10. Gender equality and women's empowerment across food security and nutrition in humanitarian crises and emergencies**

### **3.10.1. Issues and challenges**

#### ***Climate change and disaster impacts for women and girls***

115. Climate change is magnifying and exacerbating fault-lines of gender inequality on a global scale, while at the same time gender inequality is deepening the impacts of climate change, particularly for the most disadvantaged, with serious implications for food security and nutrition.

116. Climate change and extreme weather events are key drivers of the recent rise in global hunger and food insecurity. Persistent rain or drought leading to the failure of vital crops such as cereals and a drop in production of highly nutritious foods such as vegetables, fruit and animal-source foods in many of the world's poorest countries. This is affecting food availability for the poorest people, both for farmers producing food for their families' consumption and for the most disadvantaged groups – including women – who do not have land or live in urban poverty faced with inflated food prices. The result is increasing levels of chronic hunger and poor dietary diversity, with implications for nutrition.
117. An emerging body of evidence is reflecting the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women and girls, largely due to entrenched gender inequalities that are often compounded by poverty. Women and girls are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change because they have less ownership and control over assets and because gender roles in many cultures leave them with more of the burden of caring for family members while simultaneously reducing their own adaptive capacity.
118. Women's enhanced vulnerability in the face of climate change is compounded by their reduced ability to adapt, for example by diversifying livelihoods, moving to more fertile land or migrating to towns, cities or other rural areas to find alternative income sources. Climate change can also be an intensifier of gender-based violence – for example, emerging evidence reveals the increased risk from GBV for women and girls in the context of direct and indirect climate change effects that include water and fuel scarcity that force them to travel further and migration following natural disasters. Despite these gender-specific impacts, women are typically excluded from decision-making with regard to climate change mitigation and adaptation.
119. Climate change has the potential to undermine efforts on behalf of Member States, development partners and other stakeholders to advance gender equality, women's and girls' rights and empowerment. However, evidence shows that deploying gender-responsive climate resilient management can help to mitigate these extreme impacts on people and the food system, and further, that including women in the decision-making around climate policies and interventions results in more effective interventions and leads to more equitable sharing of benefits.
120. Women and girls play a key role in climate change and adaptation and mitigation and disaster risk reduction in many communities – for example through the management of early warning systems. Many female farmers and fisherwomen have gained vital knowledge of what works in the face of climate change that they are applying to their production techniques. They also often know what they need to improve their situations and increase their resilience, yet too often they are not consulted or included in decision-making processes.

***Impacts of zoonotic diseases for women and girls***

121. The COVID-19 pandemic and related containment measures have exacerbated pre-existing drivers of fragility, widened inequalities and exposed structural vulnerabilities of local and global food systems, hitting the most economically vulnerable households particularly hard, with women and girls often the most affected.
122. COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the full extent of gender inequality and

women's and girls' exposure to gender-based violence (GBV). Globally, quarantine measures are exacerbating domestic violence.

123. The public health measures associated with COVID-19 pandemic have had the effect of amplifying and deepening existing gender inequalities. Lock down and other measures has left many women in already difficult situations unable to escape from abusive situations in the home, and also has left many with reduced support networks and financial capacity, further hampering any desire to flee.

***Conflict impacts for women and girls in the context of food security and nutrition***

124. Conflict continues to affect many countries around the world, threatening personal security in multiple ways. Supplies of nutritious food are often disrupted in conflict conditions, creating additional challenges for women, to feed their families. Conflict undermines women's productive capacity and leaves women and girls at a heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Rising food prices add to this complex environment for food security and nutrition, affecting women's livelihoods and placing additional pressure on them to home school children while managing to purchase food on a decreased budget.
125. Conflict is the main cause of acute hunger. There is a circular relationship between conflict and food instability. Food insecurity itself can motivate rebellions, riots and civil war, particularly when shortages are acute, and food is unevenly distributed due to internal inequalities or corruption. Conflict is also a major contributing cause of food instability and, therefore, food insecurity. Children born in a fragile or conflict-affected State are twice as likely to be malnourished. Conflict disrupts economic activity and food production, as farmers are displaced from their land or too terrified to tend to their animals or crops. Women are most likely to be affected by these effects of conflict, as they are often engaged in producing food for household consumption.
126. Gender-inequitable access to assets such as land, property or credit mean that women often have few financial resources to cushion against the loss of productive capacity caused by conflict, leaving them unable to afford the prices of food that increase as food production falls in conflict-affected areas. As a result, their ability to meet both their own nutritional needs and those of their families is severely compromised.
127. In crisis contexts such as conflict women may be obliged to adopt negative coping strategies in order to survive, engaging in transactional sex for money to buy food or pay school fees, exposing them to more violence and increased susceptibility to HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases as well as unintended pregnancies and stigma.

**3.11. Policies and strategic approaches**

128. Governments, with the support of development partners and other relevant stakeholders, should:
  - (i) **Strengthen resilience in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, particularly for women farmers**, with more investment into solutions such as grain banks and other forms of food preservation, as well as ensuring access to micro-insurance and affordable, local sources of clean water.
  - (ii) **Provide direct funding and support** to local civil society and community-led organizations that are leading mitigation and adaptation efforts to climate change, conflict-

induced risks and COVID-19 pandemic.

(iii) **Ensure that women and men participate equally in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation** of gender-transformative food security and nutrition programmes and policies.

(iv) **Consult women in rural and urban areas about their needs in the face of biodiversity loss and climate change** and COVID-19 pandemic, and their local knowledge gained from adapting to crises should be respected and taken into account.

(v) **Enable women to participate in the discussions and decisions over climate change mitigation and adaptation.** This includes discussions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that supports climate change activities in developing countries, and in similar climate related policy dialogues in their countries and communities.

(vi) **Consider the gender dimensions of COVID-19 pandemic and possible future zoonotic diseases** in conflict and humanitarian crisis settings, and the impacts on women's economic needs, in particular on forcibly displaced women

(vii) **Promote women and girls' empowerment in decision-making regarding food security and nutrition in** households, communities and societies.

(viii) **Support environmentally sustainable, locally-owned, small-scale agricultural production** to avoid over-reliance on external value chains and prices, which often undermine women farmers' market power and have a direct impact on women managing food provision in the household.

(ix) **Make social protection measures, including cash and food transfers available and easily accessible for those most affected by humanitarian crises,** including women and girls.

(x) **Provide safe spaces** for women and girls in every humanitarian response. **Reduce security risks** at food distribution; include women and girls in the process of selecting the location of the distribution points.

(xi) Ensure that the **humanitarian crisis response planning, frameworks and programming** are informed by gender analysis and needs assessments.

## **PART 4 - PROMOTION, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE USE AND APPLICATION OF THE GUIDELINES**

129. Governments have primary responsibility for promoting CFS and the use and application of CFS policy products and policy recommendations at all levels, working in collaboration with Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) and other relevant actors. To increase linkages between CFS and the regional and country levels, Governments are encouraged to establish or strengthen existing multidisciplinary national mechanisms with the active engagement of the RBA headquarters and decentralized networks.<sup>23</sup>

### **4.1. Implementation of the guidelines**

130. All CFS Members and stakeholders are encouraged to support and promote at all levels within their constituencies, and in collaboration with other relevant initiatives and platforms, the dissemination, use and application of the Guidelines. The Guidelines are intended to support the development and implementation of relevant coordinated multisectoral national policies, laws, programmes and investment plans that will contribute to the achievement of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition, in line with the principles outlined in Part 2.
131. Governments are encouraged to use the Guidelines as a tool to undertake initiatives toward achieving gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition at all levels. These include implementing existing national strategies and programmes and designing new ones where needed; identifying policy opportunities and fostering transparent and open policy dialogue; enhancing policy coherence and coordination; establishing or strengthening multistakeholder platforms, partnerships, processes and frameworks, with safeguards for the identification and management of potential conflicts of interest; and supporting women's participation and leadership in policy processes including representatives of women's organizations and the most vulnerable groups.<sup>24</sup>

### **4.2. Building and strengthening capacity for implementation**

132. Governments are strongly encouraged to mobilize adequate financial, technical and human resources, and to put in place gender-responsive budgeting approaches where possible, with support of international cooperation and local actors to increase the human and institutional capacity of countries at the international, regional, national and local levels to implement the Guidelines and to identify priorities toward their contextualization, operationalization and monitoring.
133. Technical agencies of the UN, including the RBAs (in collaboration with UN agencies such as UN Women, UN High Commissioner of Human Rights UNFPA), bilateral cooperation agencies, intergovernmental and regional organizations and other development partners), are encouraged to support - with their resources and within their mandates - efforts by governments to implement the Guidelines.

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<sup>23</sup> CFS 2018/45/3, para. 28.

<sup>24</sup> See Part 3 for more detailed policy recommendations.



### **4.3. Monitoring the use and application of the guidelines**

134. As per the CFS 2009 Reform Document, one of the roles of CFS is to promote accountability and share best practices at all levels. CFS will regularly monitor and report progress towards the implementation of these Guidelines and their relevance, effectiveness and impact on gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. CFS will use a selected set of indicators among the global indicators adopted together with the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on SDG2 and SDG5, in the context of CFS's engagement to support country-led implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
135. CFS monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Guidelines will be in line with the agreed principles in the CFS Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF), ensuring that processes (i) are human-rights based; (ii) promote accountability of decision-makers (iii) are participatory, involving all stakeholders and beneficiaries, including the most vulnerable; (iv) are simple, yet comprehensive, accurate and timely with disaggregated indicators that capture impact, process and expected outcomes; (v) do build upon existing systems.
136. Governments, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, are encouraged to define context-specific indicators, mobilize regional and local structures to report on these indicators, and establish or strengthen, where appropriate, existing monitoring and reporting systems in line with best practices and lessons learned, in order to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of policies and regulations, and implement appropriate remedial actions in case of negative impacts or gaps. Meaningful participation of the most affected by hunger and malnutrition – particularly women and girls – as well as the development of user-friendly and technical guides, is important to adapt approaches to local contexts. Governments are encouraged to use science and evidence-based monitoring and evaluation approaches focused on learning what works and adaptation to achieve maximum results.