Committee on World Food Security

Regional Consultation on the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls’ Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition

Asia and the Pacific

3-4 November 2021

CO-CHAIRS’ SUMMARY

1. Introduction

The Regional Consultation for Asia and the Pacific was the fifth of six consultations organized by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in September-November 2021. The objective of the virtual CFS regional consultations is to align the future CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls’ Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition with national and regional priorities and needs. The Consultation was moderated by Ms Françoise Trine, Senior Food Security Officer of the CFS Secretariat. She opened the consultation, presented the objectives and agenda of the consultation and introduced the speakers. She informed participants that an electronic consultation was underway via FAO Global food security and nutrition forum and invited participants to register and post their comments.

The agenda included two plenary discussions where participants were invited to provide comments and suggestions to develop the Guidelines, referring to the Zero Draft of the Guidelines which was the main background document of the consultation. She noted that each plenary discussion had specific objectives. The first plenary discussion on Day 1 aimed at receiving general comments and suggestions to develop the Guidelines. Indicative questions were provided to guide the discussion. This discussion was facilitated by Ms Petra Jarvinen, Technical Analyst, Gender and Social Inclusion team, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), with support from Mr Le Dong, FAO programme officer, FAO Representation in China.

The second plenary discussion on Day 2 intended to discuss Part 3 of the Zero Draft, in particular policy areas and recommendations under each of the themes/sections. The discussion started with the three themes/sections identified by participants as priority at the time of registration:

- Section 3.1. Women’s Participation, Voice and Leadership in Policy and Decision-Making at all Levels
- Section 3.3. Access to Education, Capacity Building, Training, Knowledge and Information Services
- Section 3.4. Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Context of Sustainable Food


The discussion was facilitated by Ms Kae Mihara, Gender Officer, and Ms Eva Galvez Nogales, Agricultural Officer, with support from Ms Camilla Peixoto De Lima, Project Coordinator, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The Moderator introduced the keynote speakers: The CFS Chairperson, Mr Gabriel Ferrero de Loma-Osorio; H.E Lenny N. Rosalin, Deputy Minister for Gender Equality, Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection of Indonesia, and Chair of the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW); Dr. Lok Nath Paudel, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development of Nepal; and Mr. John Aylieff, Regional Director, World Food Programme (WFP), Asia and the Pacific.

The Zero Draft of the Guidelines was presented by Ms Tanja Grén (Finland) who co-chairs the CFS policy convergence process together with Mr Tomás Duncan (Panama). Ms Grén gave a brief overview of the Zero draft, providing a summary of its four sections, and then presented the purpose of the Zero Draft and the process for developing the Guidelines.

Ms Alyson Brody, CFS Senior Gender Expert, summarized the main points raised in the plenary discussions on Day 1 and Day 2.

The Consultation was attended by about 68 participants and more stakeholders followed the consultation through webcast. All constituent groups contributed to the plenary discussions: representatives from governments, UN System, civil society, research institutions, private sector and others, sharing precious information on challenges and potential solutions.

2. Keynote Addresses

Mr Gabriel Ferrero de Loma-Osorio noted the importance of the policy consensus process for the CFS. He stressed that gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment are critical for the alleviation of hunger and the achievement of food security and nutrition for all, as well as for the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He said that gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment are particularly fundamental for the realization of human rights, including the right to adequate food. Mr Ferrero said that the CFS Guidelines are crucial at this moment in time with only nine years left to achieve the SDGs and with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

H.E Lenny N. Rosalin noted that gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment are vital for the achievement of the SDGs and for sustainable, equitable food systems. She said that the ASEAN region is home to 8.6% of the global population and that, although there is capacity and resources in the region to feed everyone, food security and nutrition remain challenges. She noted that she sees the CFS Guidelines as a key instrument for addressing these challenges in a gender-responsive way. Ms Rosalin informed the participants that women comprise 46% of farmers in the ASEAN region. However, they lack access to productive resources and decision-making spaces. In addition, women’s key roles in food production and distribution are not recognized and they are faced with inequitable access to food for their own consumption. She stressed the potential value of increasing women’s productive capacity for their own lives and livelihoods as well as for the overall food security of the region, noting: “if you teach women to farm, they will feed the whole community.” Ms Rosalin noted the critical importance of the CFS Guidelines for promoting multiple aspects of gender equality and stressed Indonesia’s commitment to implementing them in a targeted way.

Dr Lok Nath Paudel noted that 690 million people across the world were hungry in 2019 and that this may have risen by more than 150 million during the COVID-19 pandemic. Factoring in nutritional insecurity the total number of food insecure could be as much as 850 million globally. He talked about the key role of women in Asian food systems, and specifically in Nepal. He referred to data from 18 years ago that indicated that women were responsible for around 60% of farming tasks but had little access to training or involvement in decision-making. He said that significant progress
had been made since then, with a mandated 45% inclusion of women in most government-funded agricultural and livestock projects. He also noted other ways in which the Government of Nepal is now committed to promoting gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment – for example, with efforts to promote gender parity in ministerial representation. Dr Paudel acknowledged that there is still significant progress to be made and noted that the CFS Guidelines are very timely for informing this process.

Mr John Aylieff delivered a joint statement on behalf of FAO, IFAD and WFP. He noted the support of the Rome-based Agencies to the CFS Guidelines and said they come at a critical time. He stressed that gender equality is a fundamental human right, a building block for social justice and an economic necessity. He also noted that gender equality is vital to the achievement of the SDGs, including for ensuring hunger alleviation and food security for all. Mr Aylieff said that women and girls play essential roles in food systems, but this work often goes unrecognized and unpaid. He noted that around 418 million people in the Asia Pacific region were undernourished in 2020, which accounts for over 50% of the global total. He added that food insecurity is higher for women than men – it was around 10% higher for women in 2020, a situation that was exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly vulnerable groups include rural women, children, adolescent girls and pregnant women. Mr Aylieff said that COVID-19 pandemic has also had a regressive effect on other aspects of gender equality. He also talked about the specific challenge of growing urban poverty and food security in the region and the need to address these issues through targeted actions. He noted that the CFS Guidelines will be an important instrument for advancing gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment as part of efforts to improve food security.

3. First Plenary Discussion – General comments on the Zero Draft of the CFS Guidelines

CFS stakeholders were invited to share their comments on the Zero Draft, with reference to the four questions below:

1) Does the Zero Draft appropriately capture the main challenges and barriers that hinder progress in achieving gender equality and the full realization of women’s and girls’ rights in the context of food security and nutrition in the region? If not, what do you think is missing or should be adjusted?

2) Does Part 2 of the Zero Draft satisfactorily reflect the core principles which should underpin the Guidelines? If not, how do you propose to improve these principles?

3) Do the nine sections of Part 3 of the Zero Draft comprehensively cover the policy areas to be addressed to achieve gender equality and the full realization of women’s and girls’ rights in the context of food security and nutrition? If not, what do you think is missing?

4) Does Part 4 of the Zero Draft provide all the elements necessary for effective implementation and monitoring of the use and application of the Guidelines? If not, what do you propose to add or change?

Question 1

There was general consensus that the Zero Draft is comprehensive and clear, but some additional key challenges and gaps identified by the stakeholders were:

Participants talked about the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic for women, girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual and intersex (LGBTI) communities, and the ways in which it has exposed structural faults in societies and economies – for example, it has revealed the lack of effective public services such as health centers, as well as women’s poor access to markets and productive resources. They stressed the need to address the root causes of food security and gender inequality, as well as addressing systemic issues – including an end to land grabbing and the exploitation of natural resources, for a truly gender transformative approach.

There was a call to use agreed language which are used in the UN system. There was also a request to stick to the Terms of Reference and to focus on rights of women and girls in the context of food
security and nutrition.

There was a call for greater emphasis in the Guidelines of the issue of women’s land ownership and the value of data collection on women’s land and property ownership.

Many participants called for greater emphasis to be placed on women’s agency and access to decision-making and leadership for all groups, including female farmers. The role of collective action and bargaining for enhancing women’s voice as well as their economic empowerment was highlighted. The value of quotas and other targeted instruments for achieving this was highlighted.

There was a caution that, while promoting women’s economic empowerment is very positive, this should not be at the expense of instrumentalizing women by placing the sole responsibility for food security on their shoulders. A truly transformative approach needs to address systemic inequalities and ensure that women’s triple burden of work is not compounded.

A participant stressed that the CFS Guidelines should communicate good practices and specific empowerment measures that have supported the empowerment of women and addressed structural power imbalances, including for female-headed households.

The value of social protection measures was highlighted, especially for vulnerable groups such as female headed households.

A participant from the Private Sector Mechanism talked about the potential value of the Guidelines for procurement agencies in supply chains.

There were calls for more emphasis on the role of agro-ecological approaches as a way to promote more environmentally sustainable, locally owned production.

Some participants commented on the need for consensus on language used in the Guidelines and urged for caution on ‘controversial’ language on issues such as intersectionality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, querying their relevance to food security.

Participants stressed the need to reference and implement all relevant international commitments and agreements that have been ratified by Asia Pacific region governments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) and Beijing Platform for Action but also including other relevant agreements such as the conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO) relevant to gender equality.

Participants highlighted the value of initiatives such as social safety nets for the most vulnerable and also instruments such as microfinance and other economic enhancement initiatives for promoting women’s economic empowerment. For example, some initiatives are equipping women farmers with business skills and knowledge.

Participants stressed that the issue of climate change on agricultural production - with women often the most vulnerable to these impacts - should be highlighted in the Guidelines. The issue of displacement was also mentioned in the context of climate change and climate-related disasters and rising sea levels – which are particularly prevalent in Pacific Island states such as Micronesia.

There were calls to include the issue of male out-migration in the draft, and to document and respond to its impacts on the women who are left behind – in particular we need to understand the challenges and needs of female-headed households.

A participant noted the need to consider the issues of violence against women (VAW) and food security in the context of militarization and conflict in addition to mentioning domestic violence.

Participants raised the issue that conflict, COVID-19 pandemic and climate change compound and intensify the magnitude of hunger and malnutrition globally and that these linkages should be reflected in the Guidelines.

There was a call to recognize that the issues in the Guidelines are linked and should not be considered
in a silo. Participants also called for the linkages between the thematic areas and food security to be drawn more strongly. There was also a call for better linkages between problem statements and policy interventions.

Question 2

Human rights and the right to adequate food

A participant stressed that the principle of human rights should be integrated more strongly across the Guidelines text as it is fundamental to everything. She noted the importance of paying attention to women’s individual rights and agency, namely their ability to define goals and act on them, throughout the document.

Intersectionality and multi-dimensional approaches

There were calls to move beyond a gender binary approach and to reflect the specific needs of LGBTI people and others facing discrimination. However, there were some debates on this among the participants and a call to use only internationally agreed terms. There was a useful clarification from a participant that we need to ensure non-discrimination to ensure no-one is left behind on the grounds of race, gender identity, religion and other differences.

Question 3

Recognition, redistribution and reduction of unpaid care (Section 3.7)

There were calls for greater recognition of the triple burden of women’s work, including unpaid labour. A participant noted the need to ensure that women are not overburdened, especially if they take on income generation activities, and that there are specific actions and principles such as subsidized childcare and redistribution of unpaid care work so that women can make use of their time for their own wellbeing and nutrition.

Question 4

Participants raised the point that implementing Guidelines that are voluntary may not always be an easy task and noted the importance of developing effective mechanisms for doing so, including public-private partnership agreements. However, the vital role of states in implementing the Guidelines was stressed, as they have the responsibility as duty bearers. For example, states should be playing a key role in strengthening public services and infrastructure that promote food security as social protection measures such as cash transfers are often not sufficient to address the issues in a long-term, sustainable way.

4. Second Plenary Discussion – Part 3 of the Zero Draft, policy areas and recommendations under each of the themes/sections

Participants voted to focus on the following three themes/sections from part 3 in the plenary discussion on day 2: 3.1., 3.4. and 3.5. The discussion started with these themes/sections and then moved to the other sections of Part 3.

For each theme, participants were asked to consider and speak to the following questions:

1) Does this section cover all main policy issues to effectively advance gender equality?

2) What are crucial policy entry points and mechanisms to address the challenges and issues identified?

3) Do you have examples of policies from your country that have proved successful in advancing gender equality in this area? What are key lessons?

The discussion is summarized below:

4.1. Discussion of the three themes/sections selected by the participants
Women’s participation, voice and leadership in policy and decision-making at all levels (Section 3.1)

Issues and Gaps

A participant noted that theme 3.1 is linked to many other themes in section 3 and called for the synergies between themes to be noted.

Participants noted the importance of creating spaces for women in multiple areas of decision-making – such as local government and community services. They pointed out that education is very important for enabling young women’s participation and mobilization, and for building girls’ confidence for leadership. However, they cautioned that the issue of women’s leadership needs to be addressed in a structural and systemic way by addressing overarching barriers such as discrimination, land ownership and VAW.

Policies and lessons learned/entry points

Multiple entry points for change were identified by participants:

- The need to listen to women and understand their needs, issues and experiences. Surveys and consultations were identified as useful instruments but participants stressed that all members of families need to be targeted, not only (male) household heads.

- Training and other forms of capacity building to promote leadership skills.

- Mobilizing young women and ensuring they complete their education in order to be able to participate in decision-making at various levels.

- Strengthening collective action as a foundation for mobilizing women, amplifying their voices and promoting leadership.

- Gender mainstreaming across different relevant sectors, including agriculture and climate change at all governmental levels as this supports women’s participation and empowerment and creates impetus to address inequalities across a range of connected issues. For example in Cambodia the national gender policy is applied across ministries at national and sub-national levels.

- Gender quotas were highlighted as a powerful mechanism for ensuring women’s political participation in government but also in development programmes, companies and other areas.

- Gender-responsive budgeting is vital, given that adequate financing is needed for the effective implementation of gender-responsive mechanisms and commitments.

- Analysis of women in leadership in order to understand the enabling factors as well as the barriers to participation, and to gain an overall statistical picture of women in leadership.

- Gender responsive national legislation, laws and constitutions – for example in the Philippines the Magna Carta of Women – based on the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against All Women – mandates that 5% of the budget should be dedicated to women’s empowerment. However, it was noted that the existence of these policies is not enough: the key is translating them into concrete action and change in terms of women’s leadership and other related areas. There is a need to address the root causes of gender inequality and discriminatory social and cultural norms that perpetuate inequality.

Examples and Lessons

The example from Nepal was reiterated – at least 45% participation of women is mandated for the majority of the agriculture and livestock-related programmes as well as in other project areas. This inclusion of women starts at the conceptual stage of projects.
In **Pakistan** measures have been introduced to ensure female involvement in loan programmes and mechanisms – for example 60% of assets are reserved for women in asset transfer programmes.

**Access to education, capacity building, Training, Knowledge and Information Services (Section 3.3)**

**Issues and Gaps**

A participant noted that women often prefer to learn from female extension service providers but often this is not possible because of the predominance of men in these roles. He said that male extension workers should be empowered to be more gender aware and sensitive so they are better equipped to understand women’s needs and concerns. He said that in addition to promoting access to education, female farmers need better access to markets. He stressed the power of female agri-entrepreneurs and said that more women should be encouraged to take up farming careers. He noted the power of positive role models of successful female entrepreneurs and said this often does more to inspire the next generation than campaigns. He also said that better value chain coordination is needed as agricultural systems are very fragmented and often don’t work for smallholder farmers who wish to participate in markets.

A participant noted that women are not only beneficiaries of education and knowledge transfer but are also key holders of knowledge, and that there should be more farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing, moving away from top-down training processes. The need for adults schools in production and marketing was raised, but also the importance of integrating young people into agricultural field schools. Participants called for capacity building in alternative approaches such as agro-ecology, and noted that farmers should co-design technologies and processes that respect women’s rights and reflect their perspectives. The need to ensure that capacity building activities are held at appropriate times for women was highlighted by some participants.

A participant called for section 3.3.3. on access to financial services and social capital to be moved to section 3.4 on women’s economic empowerment.

The value and empowering potential of digital technologies was acknowledged but there were cautions about addressing the issue of trolling and cyber-bullying, which often targets women and girls online. There was a suggestion that providing female-only online spaces could be a way forward but the importance of addressing the pernicious issue of online abuse was also stressed.

**Policies and lessons learned/entry points**

Participants stressed the need to improve women’s digital skills and access as they have much lower access to information technology (IT) and there is lower phone ownership of women in the region, particularly in some South Asian countries. This gender gap has been exposed in the context of COVID-19.

The enormous potential value of digital technologies for delivering training to women on farm extension, income generation skills and other areas, enabling them to remain in their homes and undertake care responsibilities was highlighted. However, it was noted that there are still considerable barriers and challenges relating to poor internet access, especially for remote areas and the poorest households. A participant said that ideally ICT-delivered training should be combined with in-person teaching.

**Examples and Lessons**

There was a useful example of measures taken to promote girls’ education in **Pakistan**. Stipends are available for children of primary and middle school age, with a particular focus on girls. This has helped to increase retention rates. Additionally, scholarships are available for undergraduates, of which 50% target girls.

The Pakistan government has also developed programmes that provide income generation training for vulnerable groups of women.
Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Context of Sustainable Food Systems (Section 3.4)

Issues and Gaps

Participants called for more detailed analysis of why women are not able to play a key role in current food systems. They argued that women have the right to be included as food producers and that they have critical knowledge to contribute. However, they also noted that, rather than simply integrating women into current systems of large-scale, privatized food production, the systems themselves need to be addressed. They called for environmentally sustainable alternative approaches that are inclusive and promote healthy, affordable, locally appropriate diets.

Some participants talked about the damaging practice of land grabbing from rural producers and called for 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.

A participant noted that the increasing outmigration of rural farmers to urban areas could affect food security and sustainable local food systems because the farmland is being sold to private sector buyers or is being abandoned.

A participant said that women’s capacity for economic empowerment and involvement in related capacity building such as field events is often affected by their lack of mobility and unpaid care responsibilities.

The need to increase women’s access to finance and credit was raised by several participants.

Policies and lessons learned/entry points

Several participants noted the importance of financial inclusion strategies and instruments such as microfinance, bank accounts and financial literacy in order to strengthen female entrepreneurship.

There was a call for the development of consolidated services so that women only need to visit one place in order to access capacity building, agri-inputs financial and health services etc.

A participant noted that the private sector has a key role to play in promoting women’s economic empowerment and that public-private partnerships could provide a useful mechanism.

Examples and Lessons

There was an example from the private sector company Moranation which has recognized the importance of putting money behind its actions. It has made a 345 million dollar pledge to end hunger in a way that supports female farmers and values their knowledge as well as supporting their productive and marketing capacity and creating market linkages for women producers.

In the Philippines, women farmers and fisherfolks have been supported through governmental initiatives which enable their access to machinery, seeds and other resources. There are also government-supported credit facilities for farmers, including indigenous peoples.

4.2. Additional themes

Elimination of violence and discrimination against women for improved food security and nutrition (Section 3.2)

A participant noted the importance of including different forms of violence in the draft, including gender-based violence in the context of militarization and conflict, and other humanitarian crises.

Women’s ability to make strategic choices for healthy diets and good nutrition (Section 3.8)

Participants stressed that there is a need to focus on women’s right to adequate food for themselves, not only their families. There were calls to address the social and cultural root causes of women’s malnutrition, and the need to promote women’s and girls’ participation in the decision making in the
humanitarian crises.

A participant pointed out the need to look at the causes of the poor availability of healthy foods – these causes include discriminatory social norms but the role of large-scale industrial practices that may undermine food diversity also needs to be taken into account.

There were calls to push for agro-ecological approaches rather than emphasizing the delivery of micro-nutrients as the solution to hunger. This means promoting locally-owned agricultural solutions that enable the production of nutritious food, and engaging women as key participants in these processes.

**General**

A participant called for more inclusion of opportunities and examples of good practice in the Guidelines as well as problems and challenges.

**5. Next Steps**

The comments and suggestions received will inform the preparation of the First Draft and the successive versions of the Guidelines. The preparation of the First draft will start when the six regional consultations and the electronic consultation will be over in mid-November. The First Draft will be presented to the CFS Open Ended Working Group on Gender for discussion early 2022. The draft Guidelines will be presented to CFS Plenary for adoption after negotiations in October 2022.
Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls’ Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition

Regional Consultation

Asia and the Pacific, 3-4 November 2021

(Bangkok time)

Timetable

Day 1

13.30 – 14.00 Greeting Room: Security verification and admission of registered participants

Opening Session

14.00 – 14.10 Welcome and introduction – Moderator: Ms Françoise Trine, Senior Food Security Officer, CFS Secretariat

14.10 – 14.30 Keynote addresses:

- Ambassador Gabriel Ferrero de Loma-Osorio, CFS Chairperson
- H.E. Lenny N. Rosalin, Deputy Minister for Gender Equality, Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection of Indonesia, and Chair of the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW)
- Dr. Lok Nath Paudel, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development of Nepal
- Mr. John Aylieff, Regional Director, United Nations World Food Programme, Asia and the Pacific – RBA Joint Statement on behalf of FAO, IFAD and WFP

Presentation of the Zero Draft of the CFS Guidelines – Plenary discussion


- Ms Tanja Grén, Permanent Representative of Finland to FAO, WFP and IFAD
- Mr Tomas Duncan Jurado, Permanent Representative of Panama to FAO, IFAD and WFP
15.00 – 16.45  General comments on the Zero Draft – Plenary discussion – Facilitator: Ms Petra Jarvinen, Technical Analyst, Gender and Social Inclusion team, IFAD
16.45 – 17.00 Wrap up – Ms Alyson Brody, CFS Senior Gender Expert
17.00  End of day 1

Day 2
13.30 – 14.00  Greeting Room: Security verification and admission of registered participants

Plenary discussion on selected themes
14.00 – 14.10  Welcome - Moderator
14.10 – 16.40 Discussion on selected themes - Plenary discussion – Facilitators: Ms Kae Mihara, Gender Officer, and Ms Eva Galvez Nogales, Agricultural Officer, FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
16.40 – 16.55 Wrap up – Ms Alyson Brody, CFS Senior Gender Expert
16.55 – 17.00 Closing remarks – Co-Chairs of the CFS Gender OEWG
17.00  End of the Consultation
Annex 2: List of participants to the CFS GEWE Regional Consultation for Asia and Pacific (3-4 November 2021)

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<td>Ms.</td>
<td>Syahidatul</td>
<td>Ahmad</td>
<td>Principal Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
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<td>Amalia</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
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<td>Mrs.</td>
<td>Dilupa</td>
<td>Ambepitiya</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms.</td>
<td>Kristine</td>
<td>Balmes</td>
<td>Deputy Executive Director</td>
<td>Philippine Commission on Women</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms.</td>
<td>Marites</td>
<td>Bernardo</td>
<td>Chief Administrative Officer</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr.</td>
<td>Ranny</td>
<td>Mutiara</td>
<td>Policy Analyst</td>
<td>Bureau of Planning-Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
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<td>Mr.</td>
<td>Enrique</td>
<td>Godoy</td>
<td>Project Development Officer IV</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr.</td>
<td>Dok</td>
<td>Doma</td>
<td>Deputy Director General of Housing</td>
<td>Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms.</td>
<td>Tanja</td>
<td>Grén</td>
<td>Permanent Representative</td>
<td>Embassy of Finland</td>
<td>Finland</td>
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<td>Ms.</td>
<td>Chatsinee</td>
<td>Hankittichai</td>
<td>Chief of Home Economic and Farm Women Development Group</td>
<td>Department of Agricultural Extension</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr.</td>
<td>Md. Abul</td>
<td>Hashem</td>
<td>Associate Research Director</td>
<td>Ministry of Food</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs.</td>
<td>Karuna</td>
<td>K.C.</td>
<td>Deputy Director General</td>
<td>Ministry of Land reform, cooperative and poverty alleviation</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr.</td>
<td>Rozina</td>
<td>Khalid</td>
<td>Focal Person for Nutrition</td>
<td>Ehsaas program</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hon.</td>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>Laviña</td>
<td>Undersecretary</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
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<td>Ms.</td>
<td>Li</td>
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<td>Third Secretary</td>
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<td>Principal Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
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<td>Raziatul</td>
<td>Mohd Yusof</td>
<td>Principal Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>Policy and Strategic Planning Ministry of Agriculture and Industries</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
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<td>Mrs.</td>
<td>Shabnam</td>
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<td>Planning</td>
<td>Department of Fisheries</td>
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<td>Joint-secretary</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development</td>
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### 2. Intergovernmental Organizations

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<tr>
<td>H.E.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs.</td>
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<td>Ms.</td>
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### 3. International Organizations

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<tr>
<td>Ms.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Padmaja</td>
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<td>Voratira</td>
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### 4. CFS Advisory Group

#### 4.1. Civil Society

<table>
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<tr>
<th>First Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ms.</td>
<td>Marjo</td>
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<td>Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms.</td>
<td>Shalmali</td>
<td>Guttal</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>CSM-Focus on the Global South</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms.</td>
<td>Khawar</td>
<td>Mumtaz</td>
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<td>Dr.</td>
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