



## **Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Partner Event 9:**

### **Transformative approaches to advance gender equality and women's empowerment for food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture**

15 October 2020

#### *Summary of outcomes*

This Partner Event was organized in the context of the Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security, Improved Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture (JP GTA) implemented by FAO, IFAD and WFP and funded by the European Union.


The European Union, the Government of Spain and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) co-organized the event, which featured a gender-balanced panel comprised of representatives from the European Commission and the Government of Spain, FAO, IFAD and WFP as well as senior gender specialists, scientists and directors of development organizations. Panellists explored how embedding gender transformative approaches (GTAs) in policies and programmes help to address discriminatory social structures and advance gender equality. They explained how gender equality was intrinsically linked to ending hunger and spoke about the legal, social, economic and political discrimination that women living in rural areas, including indigenous women, faced, particularly in the agriculture sector, which were among the structural causes of hunger and malnutrition.

Panellists stressed that many of the conventional gender-sensitive or gender accommodating methodologies often failed to address the underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition as they concentrated on closing the visible gender gaps such as access to resources, information, technology and credit. This was because conventional methods mainly concentrated on short-term gains and were rarely sustainable. What was needed was to change the rules of engagement and to tackle the social, economic and political as well as the formal and informal structures using GTAs. What makes GTAs invaluable is that they shine a light on underlying structural issues such as unequal power relations and dynamics, and how gender inequality is institutionalised in norms, organisations and legislation.

Four reinforcing axes of GTAs were discussed and, if all four were addressed concurrently, both food security and gender equality could be significantly improved. These axes were 1) strengthening the agency of women, building consciousness and their capabilities, voice and choices; 2) opening up access to financial, technological and leadership resources; 3) changing social norms and; 4) reforming policies and legislation. Panellists warned that policy changes were not enough to instigate real change and gave the example of Kenya that had allowed women in 2010 to inherit land but it was found seven years later that very little had changed. This was because not only had cultural perception and norms about women's land ownership has not shifted, but those institutions charged to enforce these laws had not changed their own mindsets.

Panellists highlighted an example of how gender transformative change can be measured in the fisheries sub-sector. Using two approaches, a gender accommodating approach and a gender transformative one, they performed a comparative longitudinal assessment on both, building on baseline and end line data. With the GTA, they found a significant change in gender attitudes and an increased number of women making increased inputs into income generating decisions from processing to trading of fish. Also in the GTA, after two years of implementation, joint fishing gear ownership was much higher in these communities than in the others using traditional (accommodating) approaches.





Panellist illustrated other ways in which GTAs addressed gender inequality in social norms. In the case of an example from India, they ranged from challenging the perception of girls as second-class citizens, to redistributing care work among the household, to teaching men and women proper child nutrition, to ensuring that women can inherit, own land and houses, and can buy and use agricultural technologies, to changing the imbalanced power relations in formal economies.

During COVID, economic stress and social isolation in some settings have fed into an increase of violence against women and increased their care burden. In fact, as panellists highlighted, 1 percent increase in male unemployment in many parts of the world, translates into 0.5-1 percent increase in violence against women. More work was needed to understand these triggers and find ways to prevent gender-based violence. Panellists discussed that the most successful ways to engage men and boys was at a group or collective level. Enlisting leaders, systematically approaching men in groups - since men see, measure and judge themselves in relation to other men - and the use of humour were proven successful approaches to shift men's antiquated ideas and attitudes on emasculation, and have them take up activities that were previously thought of primarily female (e.g. child care, nutrition and care work), all of which has also resulted in the reduction of gender-based violence.

Panellists recalled that one of the major successes of the national cash transfer programmes was integrating GTAs within them, which encouraged men in different ways to become positive contributing partners within their community. As patterns of behaviours are formed in childhood, panellists agreed that it was a huge motor for young boys to believe in gender equality if they saw both their fathers and mothers engage in care work, and especially if they saw their mothers engage in economically productive activities.

Panellists emphasized that a world without hunger was only possible when women, men, boys and girls have equal access to food.

The recording of the event is available at:

<https://fao.zoom.us/rec/play/AZydlmv8vUmaqCZzblAg6AthIxM9NDVR8-iDtrUAj1Y9GVXZv5EvpJPduBjssGCRWDqnVgdM3DFeMA.1NRMzxcwUw2iwyuBi> (Password: CFSPE2020+)



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