



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

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

- Version 1 of Zero Draft -

PART 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

1. Advancing gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment is 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 is 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). Realizing gender equality and empowering women and girls will make a crucial contribution across all of the Agenda's goals and targets. Thus, systematic mainstreaming of gender equality in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is critically important.
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 are failing to realize their right to adequate food and meet their daily food and nutrition needs. In 2019, almost 690 million people were estimated to be hungry, up by nearly 60 million since 2014, representing 8.9 percent of the total population¹. The COVID-19 pandemic may have added an additional 83 to 132 million people to the ranks of the undernourished in 2020², disproportionately affecting women and girls in part as a result of gender inequality and discrimination. Malnutrition in all its forms - undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight and obesity - is now the number one factor contributing to the global burden of disease and reduced life expectancy. In this challenging

¹ The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI), 2020.

² SOFI, 2020.

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. Empowering women 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 while recognizing women's sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.³ Investing in women and girls and promoting gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment are not only the right things to do to achieve food security and nutrition, they are the smart things to do.
6. Discrimination against women and girls⁴, pervasive gender inequalities 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 2019⁵ 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.⁶
7. Achievement of gender equality is positively correlated with increased production and improved efficiency in many sectors, including in agriculture, 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. Giving women the same access as men 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.⁷ 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.⁸
8. Despite positive progress made over decades, gender inequalities persist as women and girls continue to face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination in many areas. This manifests itself in unequal access to, and control over, key productive resources, assets, technologies, services, economic opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes at household,

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ SOFI, 2020.

⁶ [FAO Policy Brief on Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 and equitable policy responses in agriculture, food security and nutrition](#), FAO, 2020.

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

⁸ The future of food and agriculture – Trends and challenges, FAO 2017.

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 and stability.

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 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, and women's and girls' empowerment, 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 mainstreaming⁹, 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 helps to transform societal norms, raise awareness and supports 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 vision of CFS 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 agriculture¹⁰ 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 2021 Food System Summit.

1.3 NATURE OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES AND THEIR INTENDED USERS

⁹ Gender mainstreaming is, as defined in the ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2 - Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a way to make women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality".

¹⁰ Agriculture includes crops, forestry, fisheries, livestock and aquaculture. UNGA Resolution A/RES/74/242. Paragraph 20.

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 international initiatives, which aim at addressing all forms of discrimination against women and girls that negatively 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. They primarily address governments at all levels to help design and implement public policies, as their primary objective is to provide concrete instruments to build 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 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

The Guidelines are based on the following core principles:

17. **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, including the right to adequate food. The Guidelines promote the right to adequate food in line with CFS vision of ending hunger and ensuring food security and nutrition for all.
18. **Empowerment of women and girls.** The Guidelines promote women's and girls' empowerment, recognizing them as right holders and agents of change, and recommend the necessary actions to ensure women's and girls' self-determination and autonomy and that they gain control over their own lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices.
19. **Gender transformative approaches.** The Guidelines promote the use of gender transformative approaches that tackle both the symptoms and the structural causes of gender inequalities as to achieve lasting change. This requires engaging **men and boys** to strengthen their joint responsibility and play an active role for the successful transformation of unequal power relations and discriminatory social systems, institutions and structures.

20. **Strengthening policy coherence.** The Guidelines promote policy coherence between gender equality policy and sectoral policies related to food systems, food security and nutrition. This will help to enhance synergies, avoid duplication, mitigate risks and prevent gender-related unintended or contradictory effects from one policy area to another.
21. **Context-specific approaches.** The Guidelines promote context-specific analysis and actions that take into account the national, regional and local context and its impact on gender relations, roles and norms.
22. **Gender mainstreaming combined with targeted actions.** The Guidelines support mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and interventions. Achieving gender equality requires a dual approach and complementing gender mainstreaming with targeted measures, focusing especially on women and girls in vulnerable situations.
23. **Reinforcing the collection and use of gender-disaggregated data.** The Guidelines promote regular collection and use of sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive statistics and indicators, as well as qualitative data based on traditional, indigenous and women's knowledge, to enable informed decision-making and the development of appropriate, evidence-based responses and policies.
24. **Inclusiveness and participation.** The Guidelines promote policies that are people-centered and based on participatory approach. Enabling and promoting the participation of women, in particular women in marginal and vulnerable situations, is not only critical to ensure that policy goals respond to their priorities, but also a strategic means for overcoming social exclusion.
25. **Intersectionality and multidimensional approach.** The Guidelines recognize that women and girls often experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination due, for instance, to age, race, ethnicity, social class, religion, gender, indigenous and migration status, and disabilities, affecting their food security and nutrition outcomes. The Guidelines promote a multidimensional approach that addresses these interrelated and mutually reinforcing deprivations.
26. **Multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnership.** The Guidelines recognize the importance of leveraging effective multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships and in particular, the vital role that civil society, farmers and women's organizations, and their action can play in promoting gender equality and women's and girls' collective empowerment.
27. **Adequate financial, technical and human resources.** The Guidelines raise attention to the fact that ensuring sufficient resources is a pre-requisite for making progress on gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.

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

3.1. Women's participation, voice and leadership in policy- and decision-making at all levels

28. **Problem statement:** *Women are under-represented in decision-making processes for food security and nutrition at all levels. This contributes to the design and implementation of policies which fail to recognize their key roles, and to deliver the realization of their rights and the promotion of their*

interests, needs and priorities. Promoting women's effective participation and leadership and supporting their role as agents of change are vital to advancing food and nutrition security for themselves, their household and society.

29. The representation of women in public and private high-level decision-making bodies has increased but remains low in many countries. Women's participation and leadership in both the public and private sectors is central to addressing gender specific challenges, and embedding gender perspectives in key strategies and policies related to food security and nutrition. Limited presence and voice of women means that policies, investments and frameworks are less sensitive to their needs and constraints.
30. Among the most serious barriers to women's leadership and full participation in public life is the violence against women. Gender-based violence as well as intimidation, online, psychological, sexual, and physical attacks against women persist in all countries.
31. Women also often have limited decision-making power within their households. They may have little or no control over the incomes derived from their work and decisions on household spending priorities. In many societies, several key decisions - e.g. distribution of household work, access to productive resources, engagement in income-generating activities and participation in producer and community associations - are predominantly male-dominated.
32. A significant body of research shows that when women have more decision-making power in their households, or income accrues to them, it is more likely to be spent on food and the well-being for their children. Women's decision-making power and related household spending patterns are associated with healthier diets and better child nutrition outcomes.
33. Rural women face particular obstacles despite their significant contribution to community development. This is partly due to their multiple roles and heavy workload, but also to the persistence of gender norms and traditional views about women's and men's roles in society. The lack of rural women's voices in planning and decision-making processes is a major impediment to addressing the challenges they face.
34. ***Policy areas for discussion:***
 - i. ***Application of quotas to ensure women's representation in leadership positions in the public sector and community organizations.***
 - ii. ***Strengthening of women's organizations and women's collective action.***
 - iii. ***Supporting women's leadership through training and capacity building.***
 - iv. ***Changing discriminatory norms and addressing gender-based violence.***

3.2 Women's economic empowerment across food systems

35. ***Problem statement:*** *Legal inequalities combined with discriminatory social institutions, gender norms and practices, often result in women gaining lower returns on productive assets as well as their labour, throughout the food systems. Supporting women's profitable engagement across the food systems will ensure better outcomes for all, with positive impact on food security and nutrition and the overall economy.*

36. Across and within the food systems, gender norms and gendered patterns of behavior condition men's and women's roles and responsibilities, distribution of resources, labour allocation, decision-making and the benefits they derive from agriculture and food production. Promoting gender-equitable food systems and value chains requires an accurate understanding of existing gender relations and constraints in different segments of the value chain, combined with effective project design to address and change them.
37. To support women's economic empowerment, interventions need to consider the whole value chain and the gender division of labour within it, in a specific legal, social, environmental and cultural context. This includes analyzing production, processing, storage, transportation, distribution processes and retail from a gender perspective in order to identify the constraints to women's entry and full participation in more profitable nodes of the value chain. Rural women are less likely than men to benefit from investments in agriculture and food value chains. This is because their enterprises are often small-scale in low profit sectors.
38. Production from the crops managed by women is often retained for household consumption, offering marginal income opportunities. Moreover, as agricultural produce moves from farm to market, evidence indicates that women often lose control and opportunities for income generation along value adding processes. Men usually sell crops grown for commercial purposes at the market, including those grown by women, reducing their return on labour.
39. As smallholders move into more intensified agricultural activities the gender gap widens. Agricultural intensification requires access to productive assets, services, technology, crop diversification and markets which are more challenging for women.
40. Women's engagement in value-adding food processing activities is constrained by lack of financial services, knowledge and advisory services, technology, and training that can build women's leadership and entrepreneurship in agri-food systems, as well as socio-cultural factors that restrict women's mobility, reducing their ability to access lucrative markets. Lack of investment in technologies, rural infrastructure and women's specific activities along the value chain, such as crop drying, storage and transportation results in food losses.
41. There are many legal constraints that restrict women's ability to access and benefit from resources such as land and other productive resources. Globally in 2019, women enjoyed only about 75% of the legal rights of men, across a range of indicators including mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship, assets and pensions. Equal legal rights is usually associated with better outcomes and incomes in the labour market for women and consequently with higher spending on food and children's goods.
42. **Policy areas for discussion:**
 - i. *Legal rights that support women's ownership, access to and control over natural and productive resources, as well as their access to services and knowledge to capitalize on them.*
 - ii. *Addressing gender norms that condition women's involvement in agricultural investments, value chains and access to markets.*
 - iii. *Investments in technologies, rural infrastructure and women's specific activities across food systems and along the value chains to support and improve their productivity.*

3.3 Recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work

43. **Problem statement:** *Rural women's triple responsibilities in the productive, reproductive and social spheres often translate in heavy workload that is mostly unpaid and unrecognized, hampering their ability to participate in paid productive activities and to deliver food and nutrition security for their households.*
44. Unpaid care and domestic work are critical to food and nutrition security. It includes preparation of food and processing, fetching fuelwood and water, cleaning, 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.
45. However, this work is not equally shared. On average, women do nearly three times as much unpaid work as men¹¹. These unpaid productive activities are significant, and can contribute the equivalent of 60% of Gross Domestic Product¹². They place a heavy burden on women by taking a significant portion of their time and energy, hampering women's participation in paid (and recognized) productive activities.
46. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed not only the stark gender inequality in the care economy but the vulnerability of health and social service delivery for women and children, including child nutrition programmes. Managing COVID-19 led to closed schools, less availability of extended family members to share the care burden, and women picking up many more tasks including both home schooling and care of the sick.
47. Redistribution and equalization of unpaid work between women and men and reducing the 'drudgery' of women's unpaid work is vital for the empowerment of women and girls. Public investments are needed in welfare, social protection, technologies and in rural infrastructure, including improved water supplies, sanitation and hygiene facilities, access to electricity and mechanization of processing tasks.
48. Changing gender norms is needed for a more equitable distribution of household tasks and child care, and requires the active engagement of men and boys. Public policy has a role to play e.g. by investing into child-care facilities and appropriate social protection instruments. Bringing men into the caring economy will foster greater gender equality and support maternal and child health and nutrition.
49. Measures are required to calculate and recognize the financial value of unpaid work, and ensure their inclusion within national statistics. Without recognition that the value of unremunerated work in low-income economies can amount to more than half GDP, the assumption will continue that men are productive and women, who raise families, are consumers.

50. **Policy areas for discussion:**

¹¹ <https://blogs.imf.org/2019/10/15/the-economic-cost-of-devaluing-womens-work/>

¹² Alonso C., M. Brussevich, E. Dabla-Norris, Y. Kinoshita, K. Kochhar. 2019 Reducing and Redistributing Unpaid Work: Stronger Policies to Support Gender Equality. IMF

- i. *Changing constraining gender norms with respect to the distribution of unpaid care and domestic work.*
- ii. *Recognition and valuation of unpaid work for inclusion in national statistics.*
- iii. *Reduction of unpaid work through public investments in welfare, social protection, provision of child and elder care services, infrastructure and rural technologies.*
- iv. *Engagement of men and boys in relation with children and household care.*

3.4 Access to agri-food labour markets and decent work

51. **Problem statement:** *Women are more likely to be employed in vulnerable, informal and insecure jobs, often as part-time seasonal and casual workers. As a consequence, women are less likely to have access to social protection, including unemployment insurance, health insurance, maternity benefits and pensions. They often earn less than men for the same work, which limits their incomes and contribution to the food security and nutrition of themselves and their household.*
52. Access to secure employment in conditions of dignity and safety is vital to human welfare and well-being. Around half of the world's women and three quarters of the world's men are in the labour force. However, women are more likely to be unemployed and to struggle to find paid work due to their higher participation in unpaid household and care work. Women's paid jobs are often concentrated in service sectors, vulnerable employment and insecure jobs that are lowest paid, often in the informal economy. Rural women can be vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and violence in the workplace, especially when their employment is insecure.
53. Generally, agricultural workers - including women - suffer from 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 given exposure to agrochemicals, machines and equipment and livestock care. Women often lack access to social protection benefits and to information and training that would enable them to protect themselves.
54. Women are frequently affected by a gender wage gap, due to sectoral and occupational segregation, and to women's overrepresentation in low-wage and part-time jobs. In rural areas, women are more likely to be employed in labour intensive tasks, earning lower wages than men, and to be paid a piece rate than a daily wage. Women have less access to off-farm rural employment, critical to supplementing low farm incomes.
55. The time burden of unpaid household activities can significantly limit women's involvement in the labour market. The gendered division of labour within the family and burden of unpaid care, domestic and family farm work prevent women and girls from having enough time for education, paid farm work, off-farm paid work, leadership participation, and leisure time. Many girls 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 improving the situation of girls in rural areas.

56. Gender-biased social norms, laws and practices also limit women's participation in workers' and producers' organizations and in organized labour institutions such as trade unions.
57. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, in particular, can be vulnerable to severe labour exploitation and other forms of abuse. In the case of women, this situation is further compounded by gendered dynamics, power relations and multiple and intersecting forms of vulnerability.

58. Policy areas for discussion:

- i. ***Legal framework for equal pay and protection of labour rights including of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.***
- ii. ***Policy interventions across sectors to promote decent work, living wages, and improvement of working conditions in agri-food systems for adult women and young women of working age, with attention to safety and social protection, eliminating gender-specific barriers and discrimination.***
- iii. ***Reconciliation of paid work and unpaid care responsibilities, rebalancing women's paid work and unpaid care and domestic responsibilities.***

3.5 Access to and control over natural and productive resources

59. Problem statement: *Women in rural areas and in agriculture have less access to and control over an array of resources than men. These include natural resources as well as agricultural inputs, rural advisory services, financial services and other productive resources.*

3.5.1 Natural resources, including land, water and forests

60. **Problem statement:** *Women's access to and control over natural resources, including land, water and forest, is often limited. Women are also often more vulnerable and disproportionately affected by climate change, climate-related shocks and loss of biodiversity, as the resources they control are often the most marginal and fragile.*
61. If women and men had the same access to all resources and services, women's agricultural production yields would increase 20-30 percent, raising overall agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5-4 percent. This could deliver a 12- 17 percent reduction in the world's hungry.
62. 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, sometimes despite laws and policies that enshrine those rights.
63. In agriculture, women own, access to and control less land than men, as well as complementary natural resources including water and trees. Women's land tenure and access is often uncertain, limiting options to sustainably manage it. When women do have access to agricultural land their

plots are usually smaller, and of poorer quality than men's, and with less secure use rights.¹³

64. Women's access to water is crucial for both agriculture, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture production and for household and domestic purposes (drinking, sanitation, cooking and hygiene).
65. Fisheries and aquaculture account for 10-12 percent of global livelihoods and are key contributors to food and nutrition security. Women represent up to half of the labour force in aquaculture, largely involved in processing and trading, but women have fewer opportunities in aquaculture and receive lower returns and income than men.
66. In low-income countries women and girls are usually responsible for the management of the household water supplies for domestic purposes and in 8 out of 10 households, with offsite water sources, for collecting water¹⁴. Such time-consuming chores not only keep girls away from school but, particularly in fragile contexts, put women and girls at risk of abuse or attack.
67. Forests, and their resources, provide different services for 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 of the, including fuelwood for domestic use, food and medicine for the family, fodder for livestock and non-timber forest products.
68. The differential uses of land, water, fisheries, trees and forestry resources by men and women lead to different specialized knowledge of resource management needs of those resources. Failure to include women's specialized knowledge 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. Failure to ensure women's representation in natural resource governance systems, including community management and user groups, results in women being excluded from resource use, undermining the imposed community rules, and consequent suboptimal management of the resources.
69. Climate induced weather-related events have severe impacts on the availability of natural resources, which will directly affect women, increasing the time they need to use for fetching water and fuelwood. Climate change impacts on women and men differ owing to historical and current gender inequalities and multidimensional factors and can be more pronounced for local communities and indigenous peoples. It is important women actively participate in the debates and decisions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that supports climate change activities in developing countries.
70. 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.

71. *Policy areas for discussion:*

¹³ Doss, C., R. Meinzen-Dick, A. Quisumbing, and S. Theis, 2018. Women in agriculture: Four myths. Global Food Security. Volume 16, pp 69-74. Framing First and FAO undated The Female Face of Farming. https://farmingfirst.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Farming-First-Female-Face-of-Farming_Brochure.pdf

¹⁴ WHO and UNICEF 2017 Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.

- i. ***Women’s participation in the management and governance of natural resources at all levels, including customary institutions***
- ii. ***Equal tenure rights and access to land, water, fisheries and forests for women and men, independent of women’s civil and marital status. (4th principle of implementation of VGGT).***
- iii. ***Inclusion of women and girls in the development of Emergency Preparedness and Response Programmes (EPRP) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies.***
- iv. ***Equal participation and leadership of women in all aspects of the UNFCCC process and national and local levels climate policy and action.***

3.5.2 Agricultural inputs, advisory services and other productive resources

72. ***Problem statement:*** *Women have less access to agricultural inputs and services, including rural advisory services, and those they can access are often not well adapted to their needs and realities reducing their productivity and associated incomes.*

73. Women often lack access to critical agricultural advisory services. Female farmers, in particular small-scale food producers, receive little direct agricultural extension provision. It is often assumed that they will access information through their husbands.

74. Men and women often grow different crops and/or different varieties and have different uses for the crops they grow. Most breeding programmes largely work with male farmers and so focused on improving traits of commercial crops often managed by men. Women’s priorities in breeding programmes are often sidelined or disregarded.

75. Most farm implements, including mechanized tools, have been designed based on the height, strength and body type of men, inappropriate for use by, or even harmful to, women. Moreover, mechanization for women’s activities in drying, storage and processing may be unavailable.

76. Livestock is a key asset 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 of the cultural context, much of the animal care is carried out by women and children, with women often taking more prominent role in the care of small livestock and poultry.

77. Agricultural extension services and research are critical to supporting farmer education, improving the dissemination of agricultural information and increasing their productivity through research and evidence, in particular of small-scale food producers. Gender balance among the practitioners is key to ensuring that both women and men have access to information and that their farming challenges are recognized and addressed.

78. Agroecology and other sustainable approaches embrace the ecological, economic and social dimensions of the food system with a goal of delivering a more sustainable food system. Gender norms and inequalities have distinct impacts on all three dimensions of sustainability. Failure to recognize this will undermine their effectiveness.

79. ***Policy areas for discussion:***

- i. *Adapted and appropriate practices, approaches, tools and technologies for female farmers, in particular small-scale food producers.*
- ii. *Gender-responsive and transformative rural advisory services and research that consider women's specific needs and constraints.*
- iii. *Full engagement and participation of women and their organizations in all dimensions of policy design for food security and nutrition, including agroecological and other sustainable approaches.*

3.5.3 Financial services and social capital

80. **Problem statement:** *Women's limited access to financial services and social networks exacerbates their limited ownership of, access to, or control of, natural and productive resources. This results in lower returns on their productive resources and limits their ability to invest in their farms and add value to their postproduction activities.*
81. Lack of financial capital is a significant constraint to women's entrepreneurial activities and rewardable engagement all along the food system and value chains, from investment in land to agri-food businesses.
82. Women often have limited knowledge of, and access to, financial services, 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. And even when requirements are the same, they are often unable to fulfill them. Women 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.
83. Lack of financial inclusion for women also limits their ability to access disaster risk financing instruments to address climate related agricultural risks, including agricultural insurance, although they are often more exposed to those risks, and their assets are more likely to be sold first to cope with shocks.
84. A key aspect of women's access to physical and the necessary complementary resources are determined by their access to networks and social capital. Producer groups, agricultural extension provision, and transportation are often more available to men because they are better connected to those who control them. For example, men may obtain lifts to local towns on trucks picking up commercial agricultural production, which is unavailable to women. Agricultural extension agents, who often facilitate access to market and services, are often male and less likely to make these connections for women farmers.
85. Developing networks for women and women's organizations, such as cooperative models can facilitate low-income rural women coming together, fostering empowerment and offering opportunities for employment, enhanced livelihoods, knowledge exchange, and access to productive resources and services. While these networks often begin informally, they can grow into organized structures that enable effective bargaining with suppliers and retailers to get better services, generating profits for their farm and rural enterprises.

86. Policy areas for discussion:

- i. *Specific financial programs 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. *Women's participation in social networks, including cooperatives, with attention to effective participation of women when mixed networks.*
- iii. **Addressing legal barriers, gender norms and gender biases** for women's financial inclusion.

3.6. Access to education, capacity building, training, knowledge and information

87. **Problem statement:** *Women's education is the most important single factor in reducing child malnutrition and improving family diets. Despite the significant progress in access to education made over the past 20 years, girls still remain more likely to stay out of school than boys. In spite of the fact that literacy can be powerful tool for fighting against poverty and hunger, women account for two thirds of the 750 million illiterate adults. Lack of education and training limits female producers' opportunities to adopt improved farming methods and practices. Female producers also often have limited access to market information, affecting their ability to make informed trading choices, realizing their potential as entrepreneurs and traders.*
88. Women's and Girls' education is a strategic development priority. Better educated women tend to be more informed about nutrition and their children are usually healthier. They are more likely to participate in the formal labor market and earn higher incomes. All these factors combined can help lift households, communities, and countries out of poverty and hunger.
89. Women's education is also a key factor to reducing child malnutrition. A child born to a literate mother is 50 percent more likely to survive until the age of 5 years. Yet, persistent inequalities in education continue to affect the lives of millions of women and girls worldwide¹⁵.
90. Girls' education is associated with future economic and social prospects. However, in many areas of the world, educating girls is perceived to be less important than educating boys. Furthermore, while significant progress has been made in reducing the gender gap in education, a large gap remains between rural and urban areas, leaving rural girls in most disadvantaged position. Obstacles often include poverty, child and early marriage and pregnancy, inadequate school infrastructure, unsafe environment, discriminatory laws and policies, social norms, gender-based stereotypes and violence.
91. The primary enrolment rate of girls over the past 25 years has increased ten percentage points from 78 percent to 88 percent, less than half a point per year. At this rate, getting every girl into primary school will not happen until 2050. Low schooling levels restricts women's ability to access information and knowledge, and fully participate in food and nutrition policy and programme

¹⁵ Wodon Q., C. Montenegro, H. Nguyen, and A Onagoruwa. 2018. Missed Opportunities: the High Cost of not Educating Girls. Children's Investment Fund, Global Partnership for Education, The Malala Fund, World Bank.

formulation. It limits agricultural productivity and food security and nutrition improvements for them and their families.

92. Female producers are often hampered in taking advantage of and using extension services and information partly because of low literacy rates. Literacy 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. Literate farmers also have greater negotiating capacity to deal with actors in the agriculture value chains. Capacity building, training, knowledge and access to information are crucial tools for female producers, workers, entrepreneurs, traders and worker to make informed choices.
93. Attention should be also paid to the low percentage of women in higher agricultural education as it translates into a limited pool of available women extensionists, agricultural technicians, researchers, planners and policy makers. Gender-responsive advisory services are important to effectively channel adequate information and technologies to female farmers and to ensure that extension services target and respond to the needs of rural women. On the other hand, women's traditional and indigenous knowledge is often disregarded.
94. 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, often less than a quarter. Even where there are more female agricultural researchers, they are far less likely to hold PhDs or be in senior and management positions¹⁶.

95. ***Policy areas for discussion:***

- i. ***Addressing social norms that perpetuate gender inequality in education, capacity building, training, knowledge access and generation and information.***
- ii. ***Female literacy programmes by governments, development partners and civil society that integrate women's literacy classes into agriculture and nutrition programmes.***
- iii. ***Analysis of rural advisory services usage and performance with sex-disaggregated and gender-specific indicators related to access to these services.***

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

96. ***Problem statement:*** *Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the digital revolution are transforming people's lives, offering new opportunities to foster wider communication, knowledge sharing, and collective action. ICT provide a platform to improve food security by enabling access to information and information dissemination on food production, market, input use, food processing and storage, food supply and consumption. ICT allow to monitor, predict and communicate information on food production, shortages, and emerging situations, and mapping and monitoring agriculture production and shortages is a step to achieving food security, ICTs*

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have an increasingly important role in the delivery of services and infrastructure to women in rural areas¹⁷. However, technologies are not gender neutral, but mirror the societies that they are transforming. Applying a gender lens is crucial to reap the transformational potential and guard against potential risks that technologies can offer women and girls.

97. ICT and digital technologies have a lot to offer to women, by enabling them to have access¹⁸ to online information resources and opportunities. ICT can provide access to new economic, employment and training opportunities for women, and connect female farmers with new markets to sell their produce.
98. Mobile phones, for instance, can contribute to increasing women's safety and sense of security. Digital messages can be sent to women with respect to agriculture, but also regarding child nutrition and health care. Smartphone ownership and internet access allow women and girls to have more internet mediated engagement with respect to agriculture, food and nutrition related information. Women can receive early warning messages with respect to disasters,¹⁹ enabling them to protect themselves and their families.
99. However, digital technologies can also exacerbate existing gender inequities²⁰ in the food system, if gender aspects are not paid sufficient attention to. Currently, women in low- and middle-income countries are 10 per cent less likely than men to own a mobile and 23 percent less likely to access mobile internet²¹, due to a variety of factors, including education and resources. Consequently, they can be excluded from the information it can provide. The gender gap in access to ICT needs to be urgently addressed if the benefits of ICT to gender equality and gender empowerment are to be achieved.
100. ***Policy areas for discussion:***
- i. ***Design of agri-tech platforms to address and recognize women's needs and constraints.***
 - ii. ***Digital contents and messages targeted to both men and women, and relevant to their needs and realities, as farmers and with respect to child nutrition and health care.***

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

101. ***Problem statement: Discrimination and violence against women and the lack of safety and security for women form a significant barrier to their social, economic and political development, profoundly shaping women's lives and opportunities, at great cost to the food security and nutrition of individuals, families, communities, societies, and the development of economies. Women living in contexts of conflict or disaster are at heightened risk of violence²².***

¹⁷ World Bank, FAO and IFAD, *Gender in agriculture resource book*. 2009, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank

¹⁸ *Measuring digital development – Facts and figures*. 2020, UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU) see [section on access to internet by gender](#)

¹⁹ [Women, ICT and emergency telecommunications - opportunities and constraints](#) – 2020. International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC)

²⁰ [Bridging the gender digital divide – Include, upskill, innovate](#), OECD 2018

²¹ Oliver Rowntree. 2019 Connected Women. The Mobile Gender Gap Report.

²² A number of UN Security Council Resolutions have been passed to address these issues. The first, Resolution 1325, passed in 2000, calls for both participation and gender mainstreaming in all UN peace and security efforts, including peace negotiations, training of peace keepers, and reporting systems.

102. Gender-based violence (GBV) or violence against women and girls is a universal problem that globally affects one in three women in their lifetime. GBV undermines the health, resilience and productive capacity of survivors and their families. Women living in households with domestic violence are likely to have poorer nutritional status together with their children. GBV comes with a significant human rights, health and financial cost to the whole society.
103. Crises often exacerbate underlying gender inequalities and gender specific vulnerabilities and increase the risks of violence towards women and girls. Furthermore, the social and economic stress brought on by COVID-19 has resulted in increased prevalence of domestic violence. Women and girls with disabilities are often at a heightened risk of violence and remain excluded from basic services and social support.
104. Conflicts and disasters are major contributing factors to food insecurity and malnutrition. Children born in a fragile or conflict-affected state are twice as likely to be malnourished. Gender-inequitable access to land, property or credit mean that women and female-headed households in crises contexts have few buffers against shocks and their consequences, including loss of production, severe food shortages and prices fluctuations. As a result, women's ability to meet their own and their families' nutritional needs may be compromised.
105. Food, water and fuelwood shortages often force women to travel longer distances, exposing them to a higher risk of rape and sexual assault, particularly in conflict zones. Food scarcity itself may exacerbate tensions in the household, leading to domestic violence. In order to feed their husband and children, women may reduce their number of meals per day and their food uptake.
106. In some contexts, women, of necessity, may adopt negative coping strategies for survival, engaging in transactional sex for money to buy food, exposing them to further violence and increased susceptibility to HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases as well as unwanted pregnancies. Raising poverty and food and income scarcity also increase the risk of forced and early marriage of girls, with devastating impacts on their, health, education and development.
107. ***Policy areas for discussion:***
- i. ***Legal measures to combat GBV.*** *In combatting GBV, legal prohibitions are essential, but insufficient by themselves²³.*
 - ii. ***Application of the “do no harm” principle.*** *The food and nutrition programmes have to pay attention to the prevention of gender-based violence and to the security and safety of female beneficiaries, especially of women and girls with disabilities, promoting the protection, safety, dignity and integrity in crisis situations.*

CEDAW General Recommendation 30 (GR30) provides authoritative guidance to member states that have ratified CEDAW to protect women's human rights before, during and after conflict. GR30 affirms CEDAWs link with the UN Security Council work on women, peace and security as outlined in its Resolutions.

²³ Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls should be ensured in support of food security and nutrition in protracted crisis situations, as recognised by relevant international legal instruments, in particular the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

- iii. *Challenging and changing gender norms that generate and perpetuate GBV and promoting positive masculinities and elimination of harmful practices.*

3.9 Social protection and food and nutrition assistance

108. ***Problem statement:*** *The majority of the world's population, in particular in rural areas, are unprotected against shocks, hazards and risks by any form of social protection, women being over-represented in this group. Social protection schemes can address women's and girls' specific risks and constraints, related to their life-cycle and tackle the intergenerational transmission of poverty.*
109. Social protection programmes can support communities, households and individuals to prevent, manage and overcome risks and vulnerabilities in relation to different type of shocks and constraints. In many households, the shock absorbers are women, who may reduce their own food consumption and resort to negative coping strategies, including sale of assets, to protect the food security of their children and other family members. Social protection programmes, which can be scaled up quickly and reduce the likelihood of women's asset sales, while protecting food and nutrition security for all household members, are critical.
110. Social protection systems and their constituent programmes can play an important protective role during girls' adolescence and transition to adulthood. Social protection can also address risks faced by women and girls over their lifecycle and support them with measures such as child and family benefits, maternity protection, employment injury benefits, sickness and health protection and old-age benefits as well as unemployment insurance, and labor market and livelihood enhancement interventions. A comprehensive set of social policies and programs can significantly contribute towards advancement of gender equality in a society and address the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage faced by women and girls.
111. Social protection programmes in the form of cash or in-kind food and nutrition assistance can have a direct positive impact on food security and nutrition by giving access to more and better food and nutrition for women and their families. The first 1,000 days are critical for children's nutrition. Therefore, interventions that support a healthy pregnancy, safe child birth, exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months and diversified nutritious complementary feeding should be prioritized. In addition, school feeding can support children and especially girls to enrol in schools and benefit from learning, and safe, diverse, and nutritious food.
112. School feeding, one of the most common social protection programmes, incentivizes parents and caregivers to send children, especially girls, to school. School meals can improve learning, and, when delivered with nutrition education, 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.
113. Women and girls are twice as likely to suffer from malnutrition as men and boys, due to a combination of biological, social and cultural factors, and therefore, they may benefit from targeted nutrition interventions. Biological needs vary with women's life cycle, with for instance special needs in iron and folic acid, micronutrients like iron and iodine for pregnant women and

adolescent girls. Malnutrition in mothers, especially those who are pregnant or breastfeeding, can set up an intergenerational cycle of malnutrition. Therefore, policies and intervention to support women's and girls' specific nutritional needs are of critical importance.

114. ***Policy areas for consideration:***

- i. ***Social protection programmes paying attention to women's and girls' special nutritional needs.***
- ii. ***Social protection programmes that address women's and girls' specific life-cycle transitions and risks and the diversity of women's experiences, based on the collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data.***
- iii. ***Equitable benefits for women, men, girls and boys from food assistance and opportunity to participate equally in the decision-making and the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and policies.***

PART 4 - IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE USE AND APPLICATION OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES

4.1 POLICY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES

115. *Governments* are encouraged to stand behind their commitments to ensure the equal rights of men and women, boys and girls in the context of food security and nutrition and translate them into national policies, programmes, and investments with sufficient human and financial resources.
116. 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 to support the development and implementation of coordinated and multisectoral national policies, laws, programmes and investment plans to achieve gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition.
117. Governments are invited 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. These include implementing national strategies and programmes, identifying policy opportunities, fostering a transparent and open dialogue, promoting coordination mechanisms, enhancing policy coherence, supporting innovative technologies, and establishing or strengthening multistakeholder platforms, partnerships, processes and frameworks²⁴, promoting and supporting the involvement and engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including representatives of most vulnerable groups.

4.2 BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

118. Governments are strongly encouraged to mobilize adequate financial, technical and human resources, and encourage international cooperation, to increase the human and institutional capacity of countries to implement the Guidelines and to identify priorities toward their operationalization and monitoring at the international, regional, national and local levels. Technical agencies of the UN, bilateral cooperation agencies and other development partners can assist in this regard.

4.3 MONITORING THE USE AND APPLICATION OF THE GUIDELINES

119. Governments, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, are encouraged to define national policy priorities and related indicators, mobilize regional and local structures to report on these indicators, and establish or strengthen, where appropriate, existing monitoring and reporting systems in order to assess the efficiency of policies and regulations, and implement appropriate remedial actions in case of negative impacts or gaps.

²⁴ These frameworks include the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement and Nutrition for Growth (N4G)

120. CFS is encouraged to include the Guidelines in its ongoing work and its existing funding resources on monitoring, as defined in the CFS Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF).