

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

**Open-Ended Working Group
21 February 2021**

Delivered by Irina Wandera

Thank you, Co-Chairs,

I am Irina Wandera from the Private Sector Mechanism.

The Private Sector has been actively engaged in the gender workstream negotiations and we look forward to a final product that will make a difference in the lives of women in food systems around the world. We congratulate the Secretariat for an ambitious First Draft that has captured the multiple range of issues that affect women in food systems today and hinder their effective participation. However, we believe the draft could further benefit from strengthening in important areas. **Proper maternal health services for women particularly in first 1000 days of mother and child** is critical. There is need to strengthen language to address the barriers of **access to health services**, particularly for rural women and those in conflict zones.

Small and Medium Size Enterprises have the potential to contribute to **provision of maternal and parental leave** but often lack the resources. Governments need to **support and incentivize employers, including SMEs** to provide appropriate maternity, paternity, and shared parental leave.

The guidelines further need to strengthen the language on women voices and leadership to ensure we go beyond gender quotas and that women voices are actually being heard and there is greater uptake of their ideas and contributions in decision making at all levels of leadership and policy making.

Social protection measures should also support **education goals for orphans and vulnerable children**, particularly in developing countries where agriculture can be the primary means of employment for the vast majority of the population. When the family unit is disrupted, many of these children lose their opportunity to learn **basic farming skills**.

The Guidelines need to address the needs of **non-binary genders** who also face discrimination in food systems. The guidelines should be **inclusive and grounded in human rights**. While the guidelines throughout reference the principles of non-discrimination, equality, and human rights, they do not address the issues faced by non-binary genders thereby discriminating against these genders.

Thank you Chairs