

IFAD Statement

**Delivered by Jyotsna (Jo) Puri, Associate Vice-President
for Strategy and Knowledge, International Fund for
Agricultural Development**

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Agenda Item V. Empowering Women and Girls and Promoting Gender Equality: Endorsement and Uptake of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment (GEWE) in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition

- Excellences, Distinguished representatives, Colleagues, I am delighted to be with you in this session for the endorsement and uptake of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition.
- Today is an important day.
- After an intense inclusive and participatory negotiation process of which IFAD, FAO and WFP have been proudly part, we are now together for **the official endorsement of this important tool**, which is key to create stronger synergies between **the Gender and the Food Security and Nutrition agendas**.
- It is a voluntary document but it also is a sign of active engagement. It marks the good will of Member States and the other constituencies of the CFS¹ to step up in support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and, we hope, the commitment to dismantle all those discriminatory barriers that block and prevent the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.
- These guidelines are not merely recommendations; they reflect the lived realities of countless rural women. They shed light on the intricate relationship between equal access to essential resources, and the broader goals of zero hunger and ending poverty.

¹ Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism and the Private Sector Mechanism

- Today, a **staggering 10% of women and girls globally live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than \$2.15 a day**². Projections suggest that if we continue at our current pace, this number will only marginally reduce **to 8% by 2030**. To eradicate extreme poverty within this decade, our efforts must be amplified 26-fold³.
- **Access to and control over resources** remains fundamental for many rural women and girls as it directly affects their ability to alleviate poverty, ensure food security, and foster sustainable community growth. Globally, only **12.8% of agricultural landholders are women**⁴, and **women and girls collectively expend 200 million hours daily collecting water**⁵, which takes away time to spend on income generating activities. Additionally, the looming threat of access to food is ever-present with **a potential 236 million more women and girls facing food insecurity by 2050**⁶.
- In this intricate web of global food systems, the role of women, especially those in rural landscapes, is both central and complex. Their ability to contribute to and benefit from these systems is often shaped by their access to critical resources.
- Beyond land and water, other resources like access to markets, credit facilities, agricultural training, and technology play a crucial role in determining whether a woman **can transition from subsistence farming to a more prosperous, food-secure status**. Yet, these too often remain challenging to access for many women.
- At the heart of many communities, rural women are the stewards of our lands and the guardians of our food sources. Yet, their efforts often go unnoticed, their voices unheard, and their potential untapped. They navigate a labyrinth of challenges, all while playing a pivotal role in sustaining their communities.

² <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/generation-equality-accountability-report-2023-en.pdf>

³ Ibid

⁴ <https://www.indiaspend.com/73-2-of-rural-women-workers-are-farmers-but-own-12-8-land-holdings/>

⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-collecting-water-often-colossal-waste-time-women-and-girls>

⁶ <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/generation-equality-accountability-report-2023-en.pdf>

- **Women's decision-making power regarding household spending is directly associated with healthier diets, better nutrition**, and overall improved well-being outcomes for household members. Empowering women, therefore, is not just a matter of rights; it's a strategic approach to ensure food security and community well-being.
- The "Voluntary Guidelines" serve as a catalyst for change. They offer a vision where rural women are not just beneficiaries but active contributors to their communities. **IFAD's commitment to the guidelines is evident.** Together with FAO and WFP we work, with Joint Programmes and initiatives, to challenge negative social norms, behaviours and stereotypes that condition women's involvement in agricultural investments and food systems.
- Let us remember the profound significance of the Voluntary Guidelines in shaping a more inclusive and equitable future. By integrating gender perspectives across agricultural and food sectors, we are not only **championing the rights and roles of women but also fortifying the very foundations of food security and nutrition for all.** As we deliberate on the implementation strategies at various levels, let's ensure that our actions resonate with the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.
- Today, with the endorsement of the Guidelines, we are just at the beginning of an important process. This is the first key step but the Rome-based Agencies are ready to step up as partner to support the uptake and implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines at global, regional, country, and local levels, in collaboration with all the CFS stakeholders.
- **Embracing country ownership and fostering collaboration** will be pivotal in translating these guidelines from text to tangible change, creating a world where gender equality and food security go hand in hand.