



**Open Ended Working Group (OEWG)  
on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment  
5 July 2021, 9.30-12.30 (virtual)**

Doc No: CFS OEWG-Gender/2021/07/05/02

**OEWG Chairs' Summary**

The CFS Chair opened the meeting. He underlined the importance of this meeting devoted to the discussion of the Zero Draft of the *Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition* for the Gender workstream.

He informed participants that it was the last time that the OEWG meeting on Gender will be chaired by Ms. Satu Lassila, as Ms Lassila will end her mandate as Permanent Representative in late July. On behalf of CFS, he expressed his gratitude to Ms Lassila for her dedication and passionate commitment in leading the OEWG's work, with the successful endorsement by Plenary of the Terms of Reference of the Guidelines in February 2021 and preparation of the Zero Draft. He wished her all the best in her future endeavours before giving her the floor.

**ITEM 1 - Introductory remarks**

Ms. Lassila welcomed participants and reminded them that the objective of the meeting was to discuss Version 2 of the Zero Draft of the Guidelines. She noted that it was the first time stakeholders had the opportunity to meet and exchange views on the Guidelines since the Terms of Reference were approved by Plenary in February 2021. She emphasized the fact that the Zero Draft was an important step in a long journey towards finalizing the guidelines and that the inputs received today and in the regional and electronic consultations will inform the preparation of the First Draft of the Guidelines which will be negotiated during 2022, with a final version presented for adoption at CFS-50 in October 2022. After the meeting, the Zero Draft will be finalized, incorporating comments made during the meeting, and the final version will be widely shared with CFS stakeholders for discussion during six regional consultations in September-November 2021 and in an electronic consultation.

This document was prepared following an inclusive and transparent process:

- Version 1 of the Zero Draft was developed by the Secretariat with significant support from the Technical Task Team (TTT) and a Senior Gender consultant. She thanked the TTT for their invaluable support.
- This first version was originally planned to be discussed with the OEWG on 25 May but the meeting was postponed to 5 July to accommodate negotiations of the Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches.
- All stakeholders were invited to provide comments and suggestions to improve Version 1 and produce Version 2. Inputs were received from 11 member states and 5 other stakeholders and posted on the Working Space of the CFS website. They were all carefully considered and integrated into Version 2.
- The Zero Draft will be finalized by the Secretariat, incorporating comments made during this meeting.

Ms Lassila informed participants that this would be the only meeting to discuss the Zero Draft as there was no time available for a second meeting. She noted that a final version of the Zero Draft would be shared with stakeholders for the regional consultations in all FAO official languages by end-July.

Ms Lassila explained that Part 3 of the document focused on areas outlined in the Scope of the Terms of Reference. Each section presents a problem statement, a narrative and related policy areas for discussion. The problem statement provides the rationale explaining why the area is relevant from a gender point of view in the context of food security and nutrition and the CFS mandate. These elements are considered essential in the absence of a CFS High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) report to provide background. The policy areas highlighted at the end of each section will facilitate discussion on issues to be addressed by the regional and electronic consultations. She underlined that these policy areas should not be considered as policy recommendations, as such recommendations would be developed for the First (Negotiation) Draft of the Guidelines.

Ms Lassila presented the **Agenda for the meeting**, which included an item for participants to share general comments on the Zero Draft (Item 2). The discussion then focused on the new part of the document, i.e. Part 2 (Item 3) and Part 3 (Item 4), to make best use of limited time available<sup>1</sup>. She thanked those who had provided comments on Parts 1 and 4 and assured that these comments would be considered in the preparation of the First Draft of the Guidelines. The next steps of the process for the finalization of the Zero Draft will be presented in the last item of the agenda (Item 5).

## **ITEM 2 – General comments from participants**

In general, participants found the document appropriate to stimulate discussions during the regional and e-consultations. Participants noted the improvements made to Version 2 of the Zero Draft and appreciated the transparency and inclusiveness of the process, the way comments were handled and integrated, and the strengthening of human rights elements.

Several participants called for aiming for the most progressive, ambitious, ground-breaking, multi-sectoral and comprehensive guidelines that can be agreed in the context of CFS, reflecting present concerns but also anticipating future challenges and upcoming opportunities, and capitalizing on current global focus on the topic.

Participants reiterated the importance of drawing upon multilaterally-agreed language to facilitate consensus, with explicit references to CEDAW, UNGA Resolutions and other agreed texts, as and where appropriate. Specific references to data and evidence could further support the case for gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment, and the need for transformative actions. They asked to give more emphasis to co-dependency and interlinkages of different areas such as education, economics and food security; the order of the sections in Part 3 and space given to each of them, taking into account their relevance to food security and nutrition.

Participants asked to further stress the importance of traditional knowledge, seed breeding and small and medium scale food production, family farming, fisheries, use of technologies, role of governments, gender budgeting, positive actions in different areas (e.g. education), partnerships, and realities of indigenous women and women in urban contexts. Some proposed avoiding a “productivity bias” in the Guidelines (versus more focus on human rights), to portray women as “agents of change” (vice “victims”), to recognize diversity in sexual identity and gender orientation, and to mention not only cultural systems but also economic systems as obstacles to women's full participation in society. It was requested to explicitly recognize all sections of the private sector (Section 1.3) and to further underscore the non-binding and voluntary nature of the Guidelines (Part 4).

---

<sup>1</sup> Part 1 of the Zero Draft is taken from the Terms of Reference of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition, which were approved by the Plenary in February 2021, and Part 4 is directly inspired by the text approved in the CFS Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition.

### **ITEM 3 - Comments on Part 2 of the Zero Draft: Core principles that underpin the Guidelines**

Part 2 was generally seen as providing a strong framework for the Guidelines. Participants asked to emphasize the importance of: joint responsibility of men and boys for the successful transformation towards gender equality; women's and girls' nutritional needs (in particular, pregnant and breastfeeding women), and the realization of women and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights; the collection and use of gender-disaggregated data complemented by qualitative data to inform decision-making and the development of evidence-based M&E systems; and the perspective of children and young people.

It was requested that the guidelines include LGBTQ in their scope, promoting non-discrimination on sexual orientation and gender identity. However, several participants objected, noting there was no internationally, multilaterally-agreed language on this subject, arguing that it fell outside the Scope and Purpose of the Guidelines based upon the approved terms of reference.

### **ITEM 4 – Comments on Part 3 of the Zero Draft: Sections 3.1 to Section 3.9**

Due to time constraints, the OEWG Chair invited participants to provide brief comments on several sections at a time, informing them that more detailed comments could be provided in writing after the meeting. The main comments are summarized below.

#### **3.1 Women's participation, voice and leadership in policy- and decision-making at all levels (para. 28 to 33)**

Comments included the importance of mentioning education and training as key entry point for strengthening women's participation and of stressing the fact that participation/representation in decision-making should be meaningful.

#### **3.2 Linkages between food security and nutrition and violence and discrimination against women (par. 34 to 42)**

Participants asked to mention LGBTQ, as they are victims of gender-based violence; recommended to use "sexual and gender-based violence" instead of "gender-based violence"; suggested to replace "gender-based violence" by "violence against women and children", to indicate that negative coping strategies may be adopted to pay for school fees, and to mention different types of violence in different contexts. They expressed preference for the previous title of the section that was calling for the elimination of gender-based violence. They welcomed moving up this section in the document, better reflecting its importance.

#### **3.3 Access to education, capacity building, training, knowledge and information (para. 44 to 50)**

Participants welcomed the importance given to education in food security and nutrition for women and girls; underscored the importance of proactive participation of men and boys; stressed the need for entrepreneurial training and vocational training; asked to replace "gender-responsive" education systems by "gender-transformative" education systems in policy areas; mentioned the need to eliminate barriers for women to access higher education and to recognize that women are holders of traditional knowledge that contributes to food security and nutrition.

#### **3.4 Access to appropriate technologies, including ICT-based, digital and innovations (para. 50 to 58)**

Comments included the importance of addressing issues related to data protection and digital literacy in education for girls and preference to focus on women's and girls' only platforms

#### **3.5 Women's economic empowerment in the context of food systems (para. 59 to 67)**

Participants noted that the approach remained driven by production and productivity issues, and recommended to broaden it to food systems and to focus on local/regional markets. They asked to address women's access to land as an issue of rights (not a demonstration of economic benefits). It was

suggested to mention fair and non-discriminatory trade in the policy areas; add mechanization as a way to save women's time and energy; and mention the need for healthy diets and collection of gender-disaggregated data, in particular for women's heads of households.

### **3.6 Access to and control over natural resources, including land (para. 68 to 92)**

Participants asked to include a more explicit link to agroecology and women's knowledge and participation and also to mention other innovative approaches as solutions to sustainable agriculture. They recommended to mention the lack of access to land (in the problem statement), recognize the importance of climate change; and add a reference to VGGT and policy recommendations on agroecological and other innovative approaches. Participants welcomed reference to indigenous women in the problem statement.

### **3.7 Access to labour markets and decent work (para. 93 to 99)**

Participants' comments included: request to add reference to "women migrant workers" and mention existing trade-off between work and breastfeeding. They asked to re-consider the reference to smart agriculture and to mention the need for protection against physical risks in policy areas.

### **3.8 Recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work (para. 100 to 106)**

Participants asked to move this section up, given its importance for gender equality, and to make more explicit links to other sections of the document. They called for mentioning the need to redistribute work between men and women within households and reduce unpaid work by women in policy areas. They mentioned the need for more contextualization of the text to the agriculture sector.

### **3.9 Women and men's ability to make strategic choices over their own and their family's nutrition (para. 107 to 113)**

Participants noted the need to focus not only on nutrition but also on food security and to refer to healthy diets. Participants also mentioned the importance for women and men to make strategic choices but also to access adequate nutrition. They asked to clarify that breastfeeding competes with work due to the lack of public policies in support of exclusive breastfeeding and to assess energy needs of women when they engage in different parts of value chains. It was also asked to revise the section to align it with the Right to Food framework.

### **3.10 Social protection and food and nutrition assistance (para. 114 to 120)**

Participants asked to: use more specific language in the problem statement with reference to women's economic empowerment; mention the fact that social protection can also provide support at community level, refer to universal health coverage including retirement entitlements; mention that nutritional training should be part of social protection programmes; move beyond binary approach and recognize the rights of LGBTQ; address food assistance in emergency situations in a separate section; and recognize all forms of malnutrition.

## **ITEM 5 - Next steps of the process**

- Participants were invited to share in writing the comments made during the meeting by **Friday 9 July** COB. All comments received will be posted on the Working Space of the CFS Website.
- The Secretariat will integrate comments in a final version of the document that would be shared in English **by Thursday 15 July** and sent to the FAO translation unit for translated versions.
- The final version of the Zero Draft would be posted on the CFS Working Space in all languages as they become available.