



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 2 of Zero Draft

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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

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

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 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

² SOFI, 2020.

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.

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, 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

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.

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".

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

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

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

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 food¹¹. The Guidelines promote the right to adequate food in line with 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.
18. **Empowerment of women and girls.** The Guidelines rest integrally on strengthening women’s and girls’ empowerment, recognizing them as right holders and agents of change. They build on the positive relationship between women’s and girls’ empowerment and achieving food security and nutrition. They recommend actions to ensure women’s and girls’ self-determination and autonomy and for them to gain voice and agency, to control their own lives and to strengthen strategic choices affecting their lives and livelihoods.
19. **Gender transformative approaches.** The Guidelines promote the application of gender transformative approaches that tackle both the symptoms and the structural causes of gender inequalities and identify unique opportunities for change in gender norms and power relations for sustainable improvement in welfare for all. This requires engaging **men and boys** to strengthen their joint responsibility for 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 institutionalized multi-sectoral policies related to food systems, food security and nutrition. This will help to enhance synergies, avoid duplication, mitigate risks and prevent unintended or contradictory effects, including on gender equality and food security and nutrition from one policy area to another.
21. **Context-specific gender analysis and approaches.** The Guidelines promote inclusive and participatory context-specific gender 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.** Alongside the transformative approach, the Guidelines support mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and interventions while recognizing that achieving gender equality requires complementing gender mainstreaming with targeted interventions that focus specifically on women and girls.
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. Quantitative data will be complemented by

¹¹ [Article 25](#) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

qualitative data derived from women's and men's traditional, indigenous and local knowledge on more context-specific information including on attitudes and norms on which quantitative data is hard to collect but is indispensable for correct interpretation. Sound evidence enables informed decision-making and the development of evidence-based M&E systems and effective responses and policies

24. **Inclusiveness and participation in policy-making.** The Guidelines promote policies that are people-centered and based on participatory approach. Enabling and promoting the participation of women from different groups in marginal and vulnerable situations, including indigenous women, is not only critical to ensure that policy goals respond to their priorities, but also offer a strategic means for overcoming social exclusion.
25. **Intersectionality and multidimensional approach.** The Guidelines recognize that women and girls in all their diversity 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 promoting effective multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships in food systems. Particularly vital is the role of the civil society, e.g. farmers', water users' and women's organizations, and the potential of their actions in promoting gender equality and women's and girls' collective empowerment. Another important set of actors in the food system recognized by the Guidelines come from the private sector. The Guidelines aim to provide support for their gender approaches and to demonstrate how public-private partnering can bring about positive change on food and nutrition security.
27. **Adequate financial, technical and human resources, supported by political commitment and public policies** that promote an enabling environment to generate social, economic and cultural changes with specific gender-responsive policies, programmes and institutions. Changes should include adaptation of public services to support women, and advocacy campaigns to deal with the various forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, particularly in rural areas. The Guidelines raise attention to the fact that ensuring sufficient gender-responsive 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

The following text in Part 3 is intended to frame the discussions in the regional and electronic consultations in September-November 2021 and inform the preparation of the upcoming versions of the document. The language of this section does not represent suggested text for the Voluntary Guidelines but initial ideas regarding the issues and topics to be considered and discussed by CFS stakeholders.

Part 3 of the Zero Draft is organized in accordance with the [Terms of Reference of the Guidelines](#), approved by Plenary in February 2021, along each of the themes identified in the Scope of the Guidelines (Section C). Each section presents a problem statement, a narrative and the related policy areas for discussion.

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

28. ***Problem statement:*** *Women are insufficiently 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. Women’s voice and active participation in the decision-making enable them to influence policies, strategies and investment plans, so that they are more responsive to women’s needs, take into account their specific knowledge and expertise, address their constraints and allocate funding towards their priorities, supporting the advancement of sustainable and equitable development and food security and nutrition goals.
30. Evidence also indicates that women’s decision-making power on household spending patterns is associated with healthier diets and better child nutrition outcomes¹². When women have control over the family income, it is more likely to be spent on food and well-being for their children.
31. Globally, the representation of women in public and private high-level decision-making bodies on food security and nutrition has increased, but remains low in many countries. Also at the household level, several key decisions related to food security and nutrition - e.g. division of labour and distribution of work, access to and control over productive and financial resources, engagement in income-generating activities and participation in producer and community associations - are affected by unequal power relations, gender roles and social norms and discriminatory practices. Rural women in particular face many obstacles, due to their multiple roles and heavy workload and persistence of traditional views about women’s and men’s roles in society.
32. Violence against women is one of the most serious barriers to women’s leadership and full participation in public life. Together with other factors, such as discrimination, limited access to education and heavy workload including unpaid and domestic work, it prevents women from unfolding their full potential and participation in society, in line with national legislation and universally agreed human rights instruments. Gender-based violence women persist in all countries.
33. ***Policy areas for discussion:***
 - i. ***Supporting women’s leadership through training and capacity building.***
 - ii. ***Application of positive discrimination measures, such as gender quotas to ensure***

¹² [Is women’s empowerment a pathway to improving child nutrition outcomes in a nutrition-sensitive agriculture program?](#), IFPRI, 2019.

women's representation in leadership positions in the public and private sector and community organizations.

- iii. ***Strengthening of women's organizations and women's collective action.*** *The importance of self-association and the role of social movements to promote gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment in decision-making at all levels is recognized.*
- iv. ***Changing discriminatory social norms and addressing gender-based violence.***

3.2 Linkages between food security and nutrition and violence and discrimination against women

- 34. ***Problem statement:*** *Discrimination and violence against women and girls and lack of safety and security for them represent a significant barrier to their human development, shaping women's lives and opportunities, at great cost to the food security and nutrition for themselves, and their families, communities and societies, and economic development. Gender-based violence is an extreme manifestation of gender inequality and fundamental human rights violation. Women living in contexts of conflict or disaster are at heightened risk of violence¹³.*
- 35. Every human being has the right to live a life free from all forms of violence. However, in reality, multiple forms gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls persist in every country, constituting one of the most widespread and under-reported forms of human rights violations.
- 36. GBV is a universal problem, 35 percent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime¹⁴. Women and girls with disabilities, indigenous peoples and persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, forcibly displaced, migrant women and girls, economically and socially deprived women are at heightened risk of violence.
- 37. GBV severely undermines women's physical, emotional and mental health, dignity and well-being, sometimes leading to women's death. Yet, it often remains shrouded in a culture of silence. It affects primarily women and girls in their productive and reproductive years, compromising their capacity to take advantage of opportunities to improve their contribution to food security and nutrition, as earners and caregivers, due to the illness, injury and stigma.
- 38. GBV reinforces the vicious cycle of poverty and food insecurity. Rooted in harmful social norms and stereotypes across cultures and social classes, it affects all communities at tremendous cost for victims, their families, societies and economies.
- 39. Humanitarian crises, including those resulting from climate change, conflicts, disasters and pandemics often exacerbate the underlying gender inequalities, vulnerabilities and the risks

¹³ [How can we protect men, women and children from gender-based violence? Addressing GBV in the food security and agriculture sector, FAO, 2018.](#)

¹⁴ [Gender-Based Violence \(Violence Against Women and Girls\), World Bank, 2019.](#)

of many forms of sexual and GBV. For example, the social and economic stress brought on by COVID-19 has resulted in increased prevalence of domestic violence. Therefore, attention should be paid to preventing and addressing violence from the very onset of crises, with survivor-centered approaches, and with special attention on the most disadvantaged women, suffering from multiple forms of discrimination.

40. Due to the gender division of labour, rural women often face violence in carrying out their daily responsibilities, such as collecting water and fuelwood. Their shortages often force women to travel ever long distances, putting them at higher risk of violence. Food insecurity itself can exacerbate tensions within the household, leading to domestic violence. In contexts of scarcity, women often prioritize the food needs of the other members of the family, reducing the number of their own meals per day and food uptake, with a detrimental impact on their own nutritional status. Increased poverty, and food and income insecurity can also increase the risk of girls' forced and early marriage and early pregnancies, with devastating impacts on their health, education and development.
41. Women, out of necessity, especially in crisis contexts, may have to adopt negative coping strategies in order to survive, engaging in transactional sex for money to buy food, exposing them to more violence and increased susceptibility to HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases as well as unintended pregnancies.
42. In order to combat gender-based violence, strengthened efforts are required to fully implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)¹⁵ as an essential instrument to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment and respect for human rights.
43. ***Policy areas for discussion:***
 - i. ***Prevention and support to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls including harmful practices, in the context of food security and nutrition, with the engagement of men and boys for a world without sexual and GBV.***
 - ii. ***Laws and public policies and their enforcement, with adequate institutional capacities to deliver essential quality services and behavior change interventions including for men and boys to eliminate sexual and GBV.***
 - iii. ***In crisis contexts, measures to ensure the security and safety of female beneficiaries from the onset, promoting their protection, dignity and integrity, with special attention to women and girls with disabilities.***
 - iv. ***Changes in social norms and stereotypes that generate and perpetuate sexual and GBV, promoting positive masculinities and elimination of harmful practices.***

3.3 Access to education, capacity building, training, knowledge and information

44. **Problem statement:** *Women's and girls' education correlates positively with reducing child malnutrition and improving family diets. Despite the significant progress in access to*

¹⁵ CEDAW, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>.

education made over the past 20 years, girls still remain more likely to stay out of school than boys or drop out early. Women account for two thirds of the 750 million illiterate adults while literacy can be powerful tool for fighting hunger. Lack of education and training limits female producers' opportunities to adopt improved farming methods and practices. Women also often have limited access to market information, affecting their ability to make informed trading choices, realizing their potential as producers, entrepreneurs and traders.

45. Women's and Girls' education is a strategic development priority. Yet, persistent inequalities in education continue to affect the lives of millions of women and girls worldwide. The primary enrolment rate of girls over the past 25 years has increased ten percentage points from 78% to 88%, less than half a point per year¹⁶. At this rate, getting every girl into primary school will not happen until 2050.
46. Women with more years of schooling tend to be more informed about nutrition and adopt better dietary practices for themselves and their families. They are more likely to participate in the formal labor market and earn higher incomes¹⁷. Every additional year of primary school increases girls' eventual wages by 10-20%. All these factors combined can help lift households, communities, and countries out of poverty, hunger and malnutrition.
47. Girls' education is associated with future economic and social prospects. However, in many areas of the world, educating girls is perceived to be less relevant than educating boys. Furthermore, while significant progress has been made in reducing the gender gap in education, large differences remain 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. COVID-19 pandemic is also having a very negative impact on girls' education.
48. Low literacy and schooling levels restrict women's ability to access information and knowledge, limit the possibility to participate in decision making and fully benefit from the services supporting production. Evidence indicates that 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.
49. The often lower percentage of women in higher agricultural education translates into a limited pool of available women extensionists, agricultural technicians, researchers, planners and policy makers. 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, especially in

¹⁶ [Gender gap in primary school enrolment halved over past 25 years](#), UNESCO, 2020

¹⁷ [Missed Opportunities: the High Cost of not Educating Girls](#). Children's Investment Fund, Global Partnership for Education, The Malala Fund, World Bank, 2018.

Sub-Saharan Africa, female agricultural researchers are scarce, often less than a quarter. Female graduates from post-secondary and tertiary education would be instrumental in bringing women's reality and knowledge to institutions across the food systems.

50. ***Policy areas for discussion:***

- i. ***Addressing social norms*** that perpetuate gender inequality in education, capacity building, training, knowledge access and generation, and information, including with the support of media promoting images and programmes which challenge and expand gender social norms.
- ii. ***Gender-responsive education systems*** to promote gender equality and deliver more equitable education results for girls and boys through safe and healthy learning environments.
- iii. ***Prioritization of efforts to support girls to go through secondary school and beyond***, addressing the constraints they face to enter and stay in school, and enroll in higher education and vocational education and training in agriculture.
- iv. ***Female literacy programmes by governments, development partners and civil society*** that integrate women's literacy classes into agriculture and nutrition programmes.

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

51. ***Problem statement:*** Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the digital revolution can accelerate progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in many areas, such as education, employment and entrepreneurship, and preventing and combating gender-based violence. 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. Efforts have to be made to overcome gender related digital divide.
52. The ICT and digital technologies and solutions can benefit women¹⁸ in many ways. Through online information resources, women can gain access to credit, capacity building and new economic and employment opportunities. ICT can help women in rural and remote communities to achieve access to new markets and consumers, to sell their produce. ICTs can also facilitate any cash transfers and mediate secure transactions, including the receipt of remittances and purchase of inputs.
53. Through digital messaging women can receive crucial information that they would not access otherwise, for example with respect to health care or agriculture, including pricing of the produce, inputs and early warning messages related to weather conditions. However, the knowledge gained through use of ICT cannot replace agriculture advisory services. With the plethora of Internet of Things (IOTs) applications, women can monitor and

¹⁸ [Gender and ICTs. Mainstreaming Gender in the use of Information and Communication Technologies \(ICTs\) for Agriculture and Rural Development](#). FAO, 2018.

- regulate various management actions (e.g. mobile activated irrigation), which can save time and reduce exposure to harassment.
54. Digital technologies and solutions can help women to cope with emergencies, as demonstrated in the COVID-19 pandemic, mitigating the social and economic consequences. They can also contribute to increasing women's safety and security, and help women protect themselves and their families, through messages with respect to disasters.
 55. Digital technologies can also exacerbate existing gender inequities in the food systems, if gender aspects are not given sufficient attention. Consideration should be given to the digital divide that affects people's abilities to participate and grasp the opportunities of the digital age.
 56. The access to ICT technologies varies significantly across regions and between women and men. Women located in rural or remote areas experience a triple (digital, gender and rural) discrimination, facing significant barriers in access and use of digital technologies, due to unaffordability, low digital literacy and social norms. Currently, women in low- and middle-income countries are 10 per cent less likely than men to own a mobile and 23% less likely to access mobile internet, due to a variety of factors, including education, literacy level, skills, unequal power relationships in marketing networks, and availability of time and resources. 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.
 57. Moreover, digitalization also brings new risks and challenges, for instance, new forms of gender-based violence. It is important to address the structural barriers that underpin the digital gender divide and support an inclusive and fair digital transformation, bringing benefits to all, while protecting human rights, both online and offline, and ensuring a safe and secure cyber space, and data protection.
 58. ***Policy areas for discussion:***
 - i. ***Access of girls and women to affordable, accessible, safe and secure digital connectivity, reaching out to the rural and remote areas, with the aim of closing the digital gender gap.***
 - ii. ***Digital literacy for girls in education, and address the gender norms and stereotypes that steer women and girls away from technology;***
 - iii. ***Design of agri-tech platforms and tools with equal participation of men and women as co-designers to address and recognize women's and girls' needs, preferences, opportunities and constraints.***
 - iv. ***Digital contents and messages targeted to both men and women, and relevant to their needs and realities.***

3.5 Women's' economic empowerment in the context of food systems

59. ***Problem statement:*** *Women play active roles across food systems. However, legal inequalities together with discriminatory institutional frameworks, social norms, and*

cultural practices result in women earning lower returns on natural resources, productive assets and their labour throughout the food systems and value chains. This affects negatively women's productive and entrepreneurial potential and the overall performance of the production chains. Lack of investments in appropriate technologies and access to advisory and financial services, and information that support women's activities and productivity in the rural and agriculture sector impact negatively on household food security and nutrition.

60. Women are actively engaged across food systems. However, gender inequalities in food systems reduce women's and girls' ability to reach their full potential and realize this transformation. They limit women's access to resources, affecting productivity and women's ability to manage risks; women's participation and voice in farmer groups, reducing adoption of climate smart farming; women's access to, time and energy for remunerated activities, limiting their contribution to their family's income; and mobility and educational attainment, to mention a few. Gender inequalities and the limitations they generate have a negative impact on efforts to improve the sustainability of food systems and food security and nutrition.
61. Promoting gender-equitable food systems and value chains requires an accurate understanding of existing gender relations and the way they condition men's and women's roles, responsibilities, bargaining power, distribution of resources, labour allocation, decision-making and the benefits they derive from agriculture and food production, including income, combined with effective programme design to address and change them. Improving interventions requires applying a gender analysis throughout the value chains, in a specific legal, social, environmental and cultural context, focusing on production, processing, storage, transportation, distribution processes and retail from a gender perspective.
62. The analysis will assure the identification of the constraints that limit women's entry and full participation in more profitable nodes of the value chain. Needs and priorities of women from different socio-economic backgrounds (e.g. age, ethnicity, disability, economic status) should be taken into account, with a special attention to rural women, who are less likely than men to benefit from investments in agriculture and food value chains. This is because they often occupy low wage positions in the food systems and their own enterprises are often small-scale and in low profit sectors¹⁹.
63. Production from crops managed by women is often retained for household consumption, offering marginal income opportunities. Moreover, as agricultural produce moves from farm to informal market, evidence indicates that women often lose control and opportunities for income generation along value adding processes. In some contexts, men sell crops grown for commercial purposes at the market, including those grown by women, reducing women's return on their labour. Furthermore, even if women often grow high-value horticultural crops, such as vegetables for urban centers, lack of packing materials, cold chains and transportation result in high losses and low earnings.

¹⁹ [Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030](#). A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, CFS HLPE, 2020.

64. As smallholders move into more intensified agricultural systems the gender gap widens. Agricultural intensification is more capital intensive and requires access to productive assets, services, technology, crop diversification and markets which are more challenging for women.
65. 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 technical capacity as well as leadership and entrepreneurship skills in food systems. Socio-cultural factors often add to the problem by restricting women's mobility, which reduces their ability to access lucrative markets. Lack of investment in technologies, rural infrastructure and transportation along the value chain, such as crop drying, storage and transportation, results in food losses.
66. Although the human rights of women are legally enshrined at the international level in the CEDAW, women still face many legal constraints that restrict women's ability to access and benefit from productive resources including land and opportunities. 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 income in the labour market for women and consequently with higher spending on food and nutrition for themselves and children.²⁰
67. ***Policy areas for discussion:***
- i. *Promotion of **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 **social norms that condition women's involvement in agricultural investments, value chains and access to markets.***
 - iii. ***Participation of women in agricultural investments as business actors**, including in small-scale agro-industrialization, in collaboration with other actors such as private enterprises through cooperatives and producer organizations, providing an enabling environment.*
 - iv. ***Investments in technologies, rural infrastructure, transport and women's specific activities** (across food systems and along value chains) that support women's activities, informed by a context analysis that applies a gender lens, and strengthen women's capacities to use technologies or methods that reduce their work burden.*

3.6 Access to and control over natural resources, including land

68. ***Problem statement:*** *Improving women's access to, use of and control over natural and productive resources and services is essential for ensuring gender equality and upholding*

²⁰ [Resource guide on Gender issues in employment and labour market policies - Working towards women's economic empowerment and gender equality](#), ILO, 2014.

women's rights. Despite the crucial productive roles women play across food systems, persistent inequalities. Lack of access to and control over key productive and natural resources has detrimental impact on women's rights and productivity and efficiency of the agricultural sector. Women are often disproportionately affected by climate change, climate-related shocks and loss of biodiversity. They have less financial capacity to recover from climate shocks and may not have sufficient and timely access to climate information and climate services. Special attention should be paid to the rights of Indigenous Peoples, as they safeguard 80 per cent of the world's remaining biodiversity, and to the importance of free, prior and informed consent, critical for their food security, livelihoods and culture.

69. Rural women and girls often face restricted access to natural and productive resources, such as land, agricultural inputs, finance and credit, extension services, and technology. 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.
70. 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. Women's uncertain land tenure and access limits options to sustainably manage and benefit from it. When women do have access to agricultural land, their plots are usually smaller, and of poorer quality than men's, and often with less secure use rights.
71. Women's access to water is crucial for both agriculture, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture production and for household and domestic purposes. Fisheries and aquaculture account for 10-12 percent of global livelihoods and are key contributors to food and nutrition security²¹. Women represent up to half of the labour force in aquaculture, largely involved in processing and trading, but women receive lower labour returns and income than men.
72. 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, including collecting fuelwood for domestic use, and a range of non-timber forest products, e.g. food and medicine for the family and fodder for livestock.
73. 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 take into account 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. Lack of women's adequate representation in natural resource governance systems, including community management and user groups, results in women

²¹ [The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture](#) 2020. Sustainability in action, FAO, 2020.

- being excluded from resource use, undermining the imposed community rules, and consequent suboptimal management of the resources.
74. Climate induced weather-related events have severe impacts on the availability of natural resources, which will directly affect women, for example by increasing the time they need to use for fetching water and fuelwood. Climate change impacts on women and men can differ, due to the existing gender inequalities and multidimensional factors and can be more pronounced for local communities and indigenous peoples.
 75. 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.
 76. It is important that women actively participate in the discussions and decisions over climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity – as women are custodians of knowledge of the local seeds and plants that are vital for food and agriculture - and related issues, as women have unique knowledge and skills to help respond to climate change effectively and sustainably. This includes discussions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that, inter alia, supports climate change activities in developing countries, and in similar climate related policy dialogues in their countries and communities.
 77. Agroecological approaches are increasingly prominent in the debates around the sustainability of agriculture and food systems because of their holistic approach and emphasis on equity, embracing the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the food systems. Gender norms and inequalities have distinct impacts on all three dimensions of sustainability. Failure to recognize this will undermine this impact.
 78. ***Policy areas for discussion:***
 - i. ***Equal tenure rights and access to land, water, fisheries and forests for women and men, independent of women's civil and marital status²².***
 - ii. ***Women's participation in the management and governance of natural resources at all levels, including customary institutions, recognizing the importance of traditional knowledge and local crops.***
 - 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 climate policy formulation and actions at all levels, including in the UNFCCC process and in national and local levels.***

²² [CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security](#), CFS, 2012.

3.6.1 . Agricultural inputs, advisory services and other productive resources

79. **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.*
80. Women often lack access to agricultural advisory services. Female farmers, in particular small-scale food producers, receive little direct agricultural extension provision²³. It is often assumed that they will access information through their husbands.
81. Men and women often grow different crops and/or different varieties and have different uses for the crops they grow. Typically, breeding and crop management programmes largely work with male farmers and tend to focus on improving traits and management of commercial crops mostly managed by men. Women’s priorities in breeding programmes are rarely considered²⁴.
82. 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.
83. 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, both women and men participate in the animal care, with women often taking more prominent role in the care of small livestock and poultry.
84. Agricultural extension services and research are critical to supporting farmer education, improving the dissemination of agricultural information and increasing 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.
85. **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, training 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, climate smart agriculture and other sustainable approaches.***

²³ [The Gender and Rural Advisory Services Assessment Tool](#), FAO, 2018.

²⁴ 2018. State of the Knowledge for Gender in Breeding: Case Studies for Practitioners. Lima (Peru). CGIAR Gender and Breeding Initiative. Working Paper. No. 3, CGIAR, 2018.
www.rtb.cgiar.org/gender-breeding-initiative

3.6.2 Access to financial services and social capital

86. ***Problem statement:*** *Women's limited access to financial services and social networks results in lower returns on their productive resources and limits their ability to invest in their farms and add value to their postproduction activities.*
87. 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. Constrains to women's access to financial services such as credit and insurance include policy and legal barriers and cultural norms that prevent women from developing and growing their enterprises and their productivity.
88. Women often have limited knowledge of, and access to, financial services²⁵, 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. 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, which in turn support food and nutrition security and wellbeing of their families, especially children.
89. Lack of financial inclusion for women also limits their ability to access financing for climate related disaster risk management and recovery including agricultural insurance. This in spite of the fact that women and girls are often more exposed to climate-related agricultural risks which are amplified due to climate change, and their assets are more likely to be sold first to cope with shocks.
90. A key aspect of women's access to physical and other necessary complementary resources and services are determined by their inclusion in networks and their social capital. Producer groups, agricultural extension agents, and transportation are often more available to men because they are better connected to those who control them and have less security issues using them than do women. For example, men may obtain lifts to local towns on trucks picking up commercial agricultural produce, which is unavailable to women. Agricultural extension agents, who often facilitate access to markets and services, are often male and less likely to make these connections for women farmers.
91. Developing networks for women and women's organizations, such as cooperative models, can contribute to real change towards financial autonomy of women, by facilitating 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, experience has shown, that they can grow into organized structures that enable effective bargaining with

²⁵ [Gender and financial inclusion](#), ILO, 2018; [Financial inclusion](#), World Bank, 2018.

suppliers and retailers to get better services, generating profits for their farm and rural enterprises²⁶.

92. **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 and economic networks, including cooperatives, with recognition and support to local traditional financial systems familiar to women, and attention to effective participation and leadership of women when in mixed networks.*
- iii. **Addressing legal barriers, gender norms and gender biases** for women's financial inclusion.
- iv. **Inclusion of a gender perspective in the development of financial programmes.**

3.7 Access to labour markets and decent work

93. **Problem statement:** *Globally, women are more likely to be employed in vulnerable, informal and insecure jobs, often as part-time seasonal and casual workers. Consequently, they are less likely to have access to social protection, including unemployment insurance, health insurance, maternity benefits and pensions. Progress in closing the global gender gap in labour force participation rates has stalled and pay and income gaps put women at a further disadvantage. Women often earn less than men for the same work, which limits their incomes and thus contribution to the food security and nutrition of themselves and their household.*
94. 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 struggle to find paid work, due to discrimination in its multiple and intersecting forms, their higher participation in unpaid household and care work, and limitations on their mobility and decision-making power in many contexts. 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 and urban women can be vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and violence in the workplace, especially when their employment is insecure.
95. 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. Unfortunately, women often lack access to social protection benefits.

²⁶ [Guideline advancing gender equality the co-operative way](#), ILO, 2015.

96. Women also have less access to off- farm rural employment opportunities, critical to supplementing low farm incomes. However, when such an opportunity is there, they are frequently affected by a gender wage gap, also in high income settings, 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.
97. 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.
98. 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.
99. **Policy areas for discussion:**
 - i. ***Legal framework for equal pay and protection of women's labour rights, including those of women migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.***
 - ii. ***Promotion of decent work and women's transition to the formal economy, reducing labour market segregation.***
 - iii. ***Policy interventions across sectors by governments and the private sector 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.***
 - iv. ***Reconciliation of paid work and unpaid care responsibilities, rebalancing women's paid work and unpaid care and domestic responsibilities between men and women through national employment policies that address the main challenges related to female employment. Setting of targets for professions with flexible work arrangements, employment with childcare facilities.***

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

100. ***Problem statement:*** *In addition to their productive roles, women carry significant responsibilities in terms of unpaid care and domestic work. This work often goes unrecognized and is not considered in the national statistics. Unpaid care and domestic work places heavy demands on women's time use and hamper their ability to participate in paid productive activities. In many countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has further increased women's work burden, including home schooling and caring for the sick.*
101. Unpaid care and domestic work are critical to food and nutrition security. It includes preparation of food for the family and processing, cleaning, feeding and 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.

102. However, this work is not equally shared. On average, women do nearly three times as much unpaid work as men. These unpaid activities place a heavy burden on women by taking a significant portion of their time and energy and hampering women's participation in paid activities in labour market and decision-making processes. These activities are often not recognized while they contribute on average the equivalent of 35% of Gross Domestic Product (of 90 countries studied). Measures are required to calculate and recognize the financial value of unpaid work, and ensure its inclusion within national statistics.
103. In many low-income countries and in the context of limited infrastructure, rural women and girls spend an enormous amount of time accessing water and fuel wood for domestic and agricultural use.²⁷ Such time-consuming chores not only keep girls away from school but, particularly in fragile contexts, put women and girls at risk of violence and sexual abuse. Many girls also 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.
104. Equitable redistribution of unpaid work between women and men and reducing women's unpaid work are vital for the empowerment of women and girls. Public investments and enabling regulatory environment for the private sector are needed in welfare, social protection, and productive and labour-saving technologies and in rural infrastructure, including improved water supply, sanitation and hygiene facilities, access to electricity and mechanization of processing tasks.
105. Changing gender norms that place women within a disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work is needed for a more equitable distribution of household tasks and child care, and requires 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 cooperation and support maternal and child health and nutrition.
106. ***Policy areas for discussion:***
- i. ***Changing constraining gender norms with respect to the distribution of unpaid care and domestic work and redistributing unpaid care work more equally between women and men.***
 - ii. ***Recognition, valuation and monitoring of unpaid work .***
 - iii. ***Reduction of unpaid work through public investments in welfare, social protection, provision of child and elder care services, rural infrastructure and household technologies that make unpaid work easier and less time and energy consuming.***
 - iv. ***Engagement of men and boys in relation with children and household care.***

²⁷ WHO and UNICEF 2017 Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2017
<https://www.unicef.org/media/55276/file/Progress%20on%20drinking%20water,%20sanitation%20and%20hygiene%202019%20.pdf>

3. 9 Women and men’s ability to make strategic choices over their own and their family’s nutrition

107. ***Problem Statement:*** *The prevalence of food insecurity was higher among women than men worldwide and in all regions from 2014 to 2019. At the global level, the gender gap in accessing food increased from 2018 to 2019 and may only worsen in the face of COVID-19 pandemic. After controlling for socio-economic characteristics, women still had about a 13 percent higher chance of experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity than men, and close to 27 percent higher chance of being severely food insecure at the global level²⁸, reflecting widespread discrimination in access to food, reflecting inequality in access to adequate food. Women’s and girls’ nutritional status has an impact on the nutrition and well-being of all members of the household.*
108. Women and girls are more likely to suffer from malnutrition than men and boys, due to a combination of social, economic and biological factors. Social and economic inequalities between men and women often stand in the way of good nutrition. Biological needs vary with women’s life cycle and labour activities, with for instance special needs in iron and folic acid, micronutrients like iron and iodine for pregnant women and adolescent girls. Therefore, policies and intersectoral interventions to support women’s and girls’ specific nutritional needs are of critical importance and cannot achieve lasting success without taking into consideration these factors.
109. Women's nutritional status, especially during pregnancy and breastfeeding, impacts the nutritional status of their child. Women have additional nutritional needs, in quantity or quality, when pregnant or breastfeeding and when they engage in physically-demanding work. Malnutrition in pregnant or breastfeeding women can set up a cycle of intergenerational deprivation that increases the likelihood of low birth weight, child mortality, serious disease, poor classroom performance and low work productivity.
110. Initiatives that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women significantly improve nutrition and well-being for the entire household. There is evidence that women’s empowerment is a pathway to improved nutrition due to positive links between women’s empowerment and child and maternal health. Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index data from various countries shows a correlation between different indicators of women’s empowerment and nutrition. For example, in Ghana women’s empowerment was strongly associated with diet quality and women’s aggregate empowerment and participation in credit decisions was positively and significantly correlated with women’s dietary diversity score.
111. Women need to be empowered to make decisions over their own nutrition and be able to contribute to the improvement of their families’ nutrition – this requires access to resources, adequate nutrition knowledge, and addressing the gender norms that prevent their voice in equitable household decision-making.
112. While some aspects of food production, procurement, and preparation decisions may be part of their traditional role as mothers and caregivers, the areas where they can exercise

²⁸ SOFI 2020.

agency over these domains vary and norms and structural inequalities prevent them from having choice and agency. Conventional approaches to nutrition education tend to reinforce existing gender roles, focusing on women's roles as mothers and caregivers of young children. To address this, nutrition education programs must recognize that men must also play a role in ensuring adequate nutrition for all.

113. ***Policy areas for discussion:***

- i. ***Adequate nutrition knowledge*** for both women and men to strengthen ability to make strategic choices over their own and their family's nutrition.
- ii. ***Gender norms that perpetuate women's and girls' malnutrition*** and prevent their voice in equitable household decision-making.
- iii. ***Policies and intersectoral interventions*** to support women and girls' specific nutritional needs.

3.10 Social protection and food and nutrition assistance

114. ***Problem statement:*** *The majority of the world's population are unprotected against shocks, hazards and risks by any form of social protection, women being over-represented in this group²⁹. Social protection schemes can address women's and girls' specific risks and constraints, related to their life-cycle and tackle the intergenerational transmission of poverty³⁰. It can also contribute to transforming gender relations.*

115. Social protection programmes can support households and individuals to prevent poverty, overcome social exclusion and manage risks in relation to different types of shocks and constraints throughout their life course. In many households, the shock absorbers are women, who respond to the challenging situation by using different coping strategies, for example by reducing their own food consumption and selling of assets, to protect the food security of their children and other family members.

116. Social protection can also address risks faced by women and girls over their life-cycle and support them with measures including, among others, child and family support payments, maternity protection and paid parental leave, employment injury benefits, sickness and health protection and pensions, as well as universal access to comprehensive health services, including access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, in accordance with UNGA resolution on universal health coverage³¹, unemployment insurance, and labor market and livelihood enhancement interventions.

²⁹ Empowering rural women through social protection, FAO, 2015
<http://www.fao.org/3/i4696e/i4696e.pdf>

FAO. Social Protection and Resilience. Supporting Livelihoods in Protracted Crises and in Fragile and Humanitarian Contexts. 2017
<http://www.fao.org/3/i7606e/i7606e.pdf>

³⁰ UNICEF. Social Protection and Its Effects on Gender Equality: A literature review. By Elena Camilletti, Office of Research - Innocenti Working Paper WP-2020-06 | August 2020
<https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/WP-2020-06-Social-Protection-and-its-Effects-on-Gender-Equality-Literature-Review.PDF>

³¹ [UNGA Resolution A/RES/74/2](#), UNGA, October 2019.

117. A comprehensive set of social policies and programs (contributory, non-contributory, labour market, social care) 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. Social protection can be also a transformative lever that can be used to challenge and transform gender relations, for example when used for unpaid care work redistribution.
118. 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 are crucial.
119. School feeding, one of the most common social protection programmes, incentivizes parents and caregivers to send children, especially girls, to school. Nutritious school meals can improve students’ growth, development, concentration and, consequently, learning; when delivered with nutrition education, they 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.
120. ***Policy areas for discussion:***
- i. Social protection programmes to be universal, 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 all 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

121. 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.
122. 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.

123. 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 frameworks, 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

124. 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

125. 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.
126. 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).