

**“VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S AND GIRLS’
EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION
Comments received after the OEWG meeting of 7 March 2023
CSIPM**

CSIPM Women and Gender Diversities WG’s comments to the revised draft of the VGs on GEWE

OPENING REMARKS:

We start by acknowledging the effort and work that was put in this process: it is care work that has made this possible. We come today to voice the need to represent the marginalized individuals and communities, and to offer an intersectional reading of the different forms of discrimination and the diverse oppressive and violent conditions faced by women, girls and non-cis heteronormative persons.

Today, billions of women, girls and non-cis heteronormative persons bear the brunt of the intertwined food, health, and climate crises. These crises, unprecedented in scale, are [exacerbating](#) intolerable pre-existing systemic forms of patriarchal inequalities, oppression, racism, colonialism, violence and discrimination.

As women, girls, non-cis heteronormative persons and people of color are carrying the weight of economic, environmental and food crises, we cannot accept the invisibility of references to many crucial issues, forms of oppression, rights violations and lives, because this allows discrimination and violations to continue unabated.

The [current draft](#) contains important advances in terms of language for policies on social protection and redistribution of care work. Although almost 80% of the text was agreed *ad referendum* in the last round of negotiations held in July 2022, we have seen that some of the paragraphs which were agreed ad referendum have been changed. **We believe that is important to keep the paragraphs agreed ad referendum as they were agreed upon last year.** We still do not understand what are the objections to terms such as gender transformative approaches. This threatens to dissolve the advances we succeeded to produce in the draft, under the guise of “cultural singularity”, another way to mask patriarchal paradigms within the culture itself.

Similarly, the new draft proposed by the CFS Chair now [removes text](#) that recognises women and girls in all their diversities. It fails to recognise the existence of non-cis heteronormative persons, a population that is frequently and increasingly a target of discrimination. It also fails to recognise the patriarchal structures that have defined today’s industrialised food system in the first place.

From an African perspective particularly patriarchy is heavily experienced, especially when talking about food production. Women do not control title deeds. All women cannot get access to credit because they don't have collateral, because the title deed is in the name of the males.

The CSIPM Working Group perceives the setback of the current draft as not related to the quantity of words, but rather where particular terminology is mentioned. Simply removing from the text the voices of those most affected by food and nutrition security insecurity does not change the reality.

Women, girls, and non-heteronormative persons continue to face serious adversities, such as poverty, increased burden of care, and a rising exposure to sexual and gender-based violence. They often experience a violation of their Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights. Promoting gender equality is a key step towards eradicating hunger, enhancing nutrition, and strengthening peoples' ability to cope with crises. This CFS process should result in guidance on how to advance towards gender equality considering the intersecting forms of discrimination that women and non-cis heteronormative persons suffer. The Guidelines should therefore be inclusive of all these lived realities.

Women, girls and non-cis heteronormative persons face serious adversities such as poverty, increased burden of care, and a rising exposure to sexual and gender-based violence. Sexual and gender based violence should not be replaced with "sexual violence and gender based violence" because women go through distinct forms of sexual and gender based violence within the food production process. Recent [examples of what happened in Kenya within a tea plantation](#) have demonstrated show how sexual and gender based violence is still alarmingly present - women have to exchange sex in order to obtain jobs, or in informal settlements, where women have to exchange sex for water from the water vendors.

The CSIPM Women and Gender Diversities Working Group has brought into the process diverse voices from the ground, providing examples based on personal experience, demonstrating how sexual and gender-based violence continues to be part of their daily lives. They further explained how such forms of violence intersect with other forms of oppression, thereby preventing their access to and control over natural resources, and hindering them to produce and access food with dignity.

We call on CFS Member states to dismiss the concerns of the powerful, and to stop supporting privileged patriarchal structures.

In this sense, we demand the CFS to take a supportive position vis-a-vis the most marginalized, disenfranchised, and oppressed, even if this means a bias, because this is a bias that breaks the existing dynamics of power, striving for transformations of the status quo and for true equality.

COMMENTS ON PART 2

We recognise the efforts that have been developed in the document. The work has been important to highlight various issues. Our interest is to work together highlighting the voice of women in all their diversity to find those common points that will not be detrimental to women's human rights in terms of food as a common interest.

We would like to make some broad comments on part one and part two of the document. We are concerned about some situations that we want to leave on the table in order to start moving forward in the negotiation. Regarding part one: for us it is fundamental to recognise the peasant identity of women and girls in all its diversity, **without any footnote**. Being a peasant is an identity and defines a broad mass of people who have a central role in the right to food: in the production, transformation, exchange and biological use, ancestral cultural knowledge and care of the common goods that are the basis of our food systems. Peasantry is a category recognised in the Declaration of peasants and other people living and working in rural areas, known as UNDROP, recognised by the United Nations and a common human rights framework. It is also recognised in other CFS documents, such as the Voluntary Guidelines on Land Tenure. We therefore recognise it as a common framework and suggest including it without

We in the Mechanism propose to **advance a vision to promote gender transformative approaches based on human rights**, and as defined in the Terms of Reference: "capable of addressing both the symptoms

and structural causes of gender inequalities with the aim of achieving lasting change in terms of the inequalities of power and the choices women have over their own lives, rather than merely a temporary increase in opportunities". In this sense, we do not understand why gender transformative approaches are being replaced, this should not be controversial as it's definition is well stated in the document and the ToRs.

We suggest an emphasis on the participation of civil society and women as a fundamental part of joint action with governments (paragraphs 25 and 32). We know that you have given a prominent role in implementation and the role of governments. We want to emphasise that the role of civil society and women can also go hand in hand as agents of change and transformers of their life projects in the search for food autonomy. This is why the newly added paragraph on "country ownership" (paragraph 23) might be limited in scope, besides being repetitive (the Guidelines are Voluntary, and several paragraphs in the document already refer to the implementation of the Guidelines according to the national contexts).

We suggest clarifications throughout the text and in all languages to strengthen categories such as intersectionality, recognition of the multiple oppressions suffered by women and girls and non-heteronormative people (paragraph 26). The guidelines should not go back on established definitions. **Intersectionality must continue to be the framework through which we seek to reduce inequalities**, as well as reiterate a more inclusive framework for other gender identities, because they are not reflected, reiterating common ground that does not roll back historical advances in women's human rights. We must not fall into euphemisms such as "multidimensional approaches" for example.

These Guidelines come out of the United Nations Common Framework. We propose to maintain and sustain the human rights approach is fundamental, since we are talking about the human right to food, which is recognised as a principle and is agreed language of the United Nations. Therefore, we believe that it should be included in several parts of the text, to give greater clarity and lay the foundations on which we are discussing and want to materialise. We are concerned about the deletion of human rights in paragraph 29.

Likewise, for us it is important to highlight the role and situation of women caregivers, and women in armed conflicts who are in a situation of vulnerability because they do not have a sufficient support network and have to give up their life projects, being economically and psychologically dependent, which makes them more vulnerable to hunger (paragraphs 29).

Finally, we still do not understand what is meant by "positive participation of men and boys" (paragraph 32 (ii)). We would like to stress that it is important to define it in order not to fall into reproducing sexist stereotypes or acting with harm.

COMMENTS ON PART 3

In general, when referring to Indigenous Peoples or Indigenous women, capital letters should be used. Moreover, it is important to refer to Indigenous women and rural women instead of Indigenous and rural women, as the realities of these 2 constituencies differ from one another and both need to be highlighted.

On paragraphs 41 and 57, we do not agree with the removal of "patriarchy". Patriarchy has to be named as a macro level discriminatory and oppressive force.

On paragraph 63, we would ask for clarification on why the footnote to the UN resolution on the human right to safe drinking water and basic sanitation has been deleted. This is a resolution agreed by the General Assembly and it is important to retain it.

We already referred to the importance on keeping the intersecting forms of discrimination throughout the text, this also applies to part three of the document.

We recognize that this document has already important progress in terms of language regarding redistribution and recognition of unpaid care work, social protection and women's access to labour. However, coming back to the issue of the structure, we already raised a comment in the Friends of the Chair session on the 8th of February, and we still do not understand how recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid work and domestic work are not the focus of these guidelines. We do not understand why this has been moved to a later section. This applies also to the section on sexual and gender based violence. As mentioned earlier, we need a document that gives guidance on how to access food in dignity. The structure has been also an exercise of two years, to include this section at the very beginning of this document. We should not leave that work aside.

In reference to land tenure rights, there have been some significant changes that will detriment progress made over the past years at the UN level. The CSIPM is concerned with the deletion of land tenure rights and related references such as "arbitrary loss and forced eviction". These aspects have been agreed in the VGGTs and should be spelled out in these guidelines. Moreover, in terms of access to land, and natural and productive resources, references on addressing religious laws, unbiased legal frameworks and social norms should be made.

In terms of access to financial services and social capital, references to solidarity funds and cooperatives should be made as they allow for new dynamics for collective work.

We insist on keeping the references to sexual and gender based violence and not sexual violence and gender based violence. The formulation that was initially presented adequately reflects that sexual violence is still a dramatic result of gender based discrimination and violence. The victims of sexual violence the continue to be disproportionately women and girls. We are also concerned with the addition of some additions which were not announced before. These changes might open the door for an interpretation for not changing the current social norms. Sexual and gender based violence and gender based violence need to be addressed in any given context. If particular references to violence and agriculture need to be made in paragraphs 98.i, ii, iii and 99.i, then we would demand for this to be reformulated. It also needs to be clear that agriculture and food systems include the intra-household spheres, where food provisioning takes place and where SGBV occurs. Enough evidence has been provided on this regard, particularly on how SGBV increased during the pandemic.

FINAL COMMENTS

We request a thorough revision of the translations of the Guidelines so as to reflect their inclusiveness in all the languages.