

Written comments from Canada on the “renewed” Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls’ Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition

Submitted on March 24, 2023

Canada welcomes and supports the process of continuing the negotiations with the objective of reaching an agreement on the Voluntary Guidelines for presentation to the CFS51 plenary.

We are supportive of the proposed solutions on contentious issues and we are ready to work with this renewed draft for the negotiations on the understanding that the principle of “no step back” be upheld, building on the 80% agreed paragraphs.

Canada remains committed to work constructively to achieve a strong, useful, meaningful and impactful final document, which will contribute to the advancement of GEWGE in the context of food security and nutrition. We recognize the important value of the Guidelines. Gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment is essential for achieving food security, as well as the Agenda 2030, even more so in the current context of the global food and nutrition crisis.

Overall Comments

- **Gender-Based Violence:** We are supportive of the solutions proposed, including moving down the section, as we understand that this is not linked with the level of prioritization of the topic. We are also ready to accept the removal of the use of SBGV. We want to emphasize the importance of keeping – as proposed – the references to sexual violence. Sexual violence is one of the most pervasive and one of the worst forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls; it is also usually perpetrated against the most vulnerable and the most marginalized women and girls (e.g. poorer, refugee, or rural women and girls; and women and girls with disabilities). It is therefore important to keep a clear and explicit reference to this form of violence.
- **“All women and girls”:** We can accept the solution proposed to use the terms “All women and girls” instead of “Women and girls in all their diversity”, noting however that there are many references to diversity in UN texts, including the following two recent UNGA resolutions:
 - PP9, A/RES/76/176 (Strengthening the role of the United Nations in the promotion and democratization and enhancing periodic and genuine elections): Highlighting the importance of including **women in all their diversity** on an equal basis in election processes that are free from discrimination and allow for their full, equal and meaningful participation, allowing for gender-responsive political institutions and the creation of more inclusive societies.
 - PP37, A/RES/77/193 (Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: gender stereotypes and negative social norms): Recognizing the need to promote the full, effective, equal and meaningful participation of **women in all their diversity** and women’s and girls’ rights organizations and women’s...
- **Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination:** We strongly support the use of the language “Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination”, and we support the proposed solution to include before “all forms of discrimination”. It is crucial to recognize not only that there exist multiple forms of discriminations, but also how the intersection of these sources of discrimination create different experiences.

Specific Comments

Paragraph 6:

6. GEWGE are essential to poverty reduction, economic growth, social wellbeing, sustainable management of natural resources, climate change adaptation and mitigation and ecosystem and biodiversity protection and conservation. Achievement of gender equality is positively correlated with increased production and improved efficiency in many sectors – including in agriculture⁴ in a context where small-scale and family farming is increasingly feminized – whereas inequality and discrimination in access to, and control over, resources continue to undermine economic development, leading to below-potential economic outcomes⁵. Women play active roles as agents in food systems as farmers, producers, peasants⁶, family farmers, fisherfolks and pastoralists, processors, traders, wage-workers, smallholders and entrepreneurs throughout food systems and value chains, and as consumers and providers for their ~~family~~ families. [Pending agreement]

Paragraph 17, in the list of documents

· Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, and ~~its~~ the outcome documents of its review conferences;

Comment: We recommend making this adjustment to be consistent with the way this instrument is referenced later in the Guidelines, at paragraph 82, but also given that this is how the document is referenced in the SDGs and as standard text in UNGA.

Paragraph 82:

Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of ~~their~~ its review conferences.

Paragraph 22:

Tackling structural barriers to gender equality. The Guidelines promote the application of innovative gender equality approaches that challenge and tackle both the symptoms– including women’s restricted access to land, financial services and other productive resources - and the structural causes of gender inequality, including discriminatory laws, policies, social norms, attitudes, harmful customary practices and gender stereotypes, for more sustainable and nutritious food systems for all. This requires the collective engagement of all, including men and boys, as well as local and traditional authorities, recognizing and respecting leadership of women and girls, to strengthen joint responsibility and commitment for successful transformation of unequal power relations between men and women. [Pending agreement]

Rationale:

- “Gender approaches” is not common terminology and has no particular meaning in this text.
- It is important to ensure nutrient adequacy for food and food systems given that it is critical for health and wellbeing. The use of “nutritious” to capture nutrient adequacy was rightly highlighted in other paragraphs and headers of the guidelines.

Para 68. Through their transformative potential, agroecological and other innovative approaches, and all other sustainable innovations and technologies, can improve the sustainability and inclusiveness of agriculture and food systems provided that they encompass an holistic approach and emphasis on gender equality, embracing the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environment) and contributing to the local production and availability of diverse, affordable, nutritious, healthy, and culturally appropriate food. [Pending agreement]

Rationale: idem as for paragraph 22