

CFS HLPE Report on Reducing Inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition

UN Women Inputs

- UN Women welcomes the HLPE's report on Reducing Inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition. We appreciate that it has employed varied forms of evidence including indigenous and local knowledge to support its findings and that gender inequality and women's and girl's unequal access to food security and nutrition is reflected. We fully support and echo the importance of adopting an intersectional, transformative and rights-based approach to reducing food security and nutrition (FSN) inequalities.
- The Agreed Conclusions of the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) ([E/CN.6/2022/L.7](#)), where the Commission emphasized that “**achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls can result in greater food security, better nutrition and more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food systems for all**, and that their unequal access and rights to important resources and productive assets, such as land, water, pasture, agricultural inputs, technology and information, as well as extension and advisory services, limits their potential to be productive in agriculture, become empowered to make strategic decisions, and realize their rights. It also emphasizes that unequal food systems disproportionately impact women and girls, making them more vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition, which is exacerbated, inter alia, by climate change, environmental degradation and disasters.” We were pleased to see some reflections of these points across the report and trust that the policy convergence process will also set forth strong recommendations on addressing gender inequalities as intimately connected to achieving food security and nutrition.
- UN Women appreciates the report's emphasis on **social protection** and the positive impact it can have on reducing inequalities. We would stress that women and girls have significantly lower access to social protection systems than men which can deepen or perpetuate inequalities including gender and economic inequalities. We recognise the reports equity sensitive approach to extending social protection coverage and we bring attention to the need for gender-responsive social protection systems that work for women and girls in all their diversity.
 - The 25-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) ([E/CN.6/2020/3](#)) found that reducing women's poverty and ensuring their right to an adequate standard of living depends on targeting persistent inequalities in access to social protection. Women and girls who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are particularly subject to exclusion and poverty which can negatively impact their food security and nutrition.
 - Social protection systems that are well-designed can have powerful impacts of the long-term, by reducing inequalities, building resilience, and ending the inter-generational cycle of poverty.
 - Further, social protection measures that take into consideration informal workers could have positive impacts on inequalities, particularly for the large share of women in agriculture. Nearly [60 per cent of women's employment globally is in the informal economy](#) (non-agriculture and agriculture) and in low-income countries it is more than 90 per cent.

- Realizing human right to social security¹ and to deliver on the 2030 Agenda’s promise of leaving no one behind requires particular attention to extending social protection coverage women and girls in all their diversity. This means accelerating progress in implementing integrated and gender-responsive social protection systems, backed by adequate financing with strong political commitment from decision-makers and where social partners, producer organizations including cooperatives and civil society groups are actively involved in the design and implementation of social protection systems that are responsive to people’s needs.
 - Today, 1 in every 10 women is living in extreme **poverty** (10.3%). If current trends continue, by 2030, an estimated 8% of the world’s female population – 342.4 million women and girls – will still be living on less than \$2.15 a day. Most (220.9 million) will reside in sub-Saharan Africa.² In this world of sky-rocketing risks and vulnerabilities, the need for universal, gender-responsive social protection systems has never been greater to achieve gender equality, realize human rights, address inequality and eradicate poverty, all of which link to FSN.
- There is greater need to look at how **unpaid care and domestic work** and disproportionate **time poverty** specifically impacts women in relation to livelihoods and food security and nutrition. We appreciate the recommendation that social policy be inclusive of the time burden that women face, especially the recognition that women healthcare workers face a “triple burden of care”. We recommend that the policy recommendations address how women and girls are affected by time poverty and an unequal share of unpaid care and domestic work and how addressing the care economy can be a means for reducing social, political, economic and environmental inequalities.
 - Globally, women and girls spend 3 times more time on unpaid care and domestic work. This is also exacerbated by the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, which leads to an increase in women and girls unequal share of unpaid care and domestic work.³ For related agreed language, please refer to the CSW66 Agreed Conclusions ([E/CN.6/2022/L.7](#)). **The policy convergence process should take into consideration relevant Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women.**
 - The **debt crisis** should be taken into consideration as recent evidence is showing an alarming trend of debt distress that could perpetuate inequalities both within and between countries. Developing countries have struggled to secure enough financial resources to respond to and recover from the impacts of cascading crises and have grappled with the quandary of whether to service their debts or their people – 3.3 billion people live in countries that spend more on interest payments than on education or health.⁴ In 2021, low- and middle-income countries spent 27.5% of their budgets on debt service, which was nearly 12 times that spent on social protection.⁵ During the past decade, interest payments by developing countries have quadrupled to an all-time high of \$23.6 billion in 2022. This debt crisis with rising borrowing costs is shifting scarce resources away from critical needs such as social protection, poverty eradication, and sustainable food systems.⁶ Moreover,

¹ Articles 22 and 25 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#).

² UN Women and UN-DESA. 2023. [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023](#).

³ UN Women. 2023. [The Climate-Care Nexus: Addressing The Linkages Between Climate Change and Women’s and Girls’ Unpaid Care, Domestic and Communal Work](#)

⁴ United Nations, [A world of debt. A growing burden to global prosperity](#) (New York, 2023).

⁵ Oxfam and Development Finance International, [The Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index 2022](#) (Oxford, 2022).

⁶ World Bank. 2023. [“International Debt Report 2023”](#).

debt-related austerity measures and budget cuts in public services have strongly gendered impacts, foremost among them women's and girls' increasing poverty, exclusion and unpaid care and domestic work,⁷ which trends show would have negative impacts on their FSN.

- To meaningfully address gender inequalities in the context of food security and nutrition it will be important to also take into consideration the following:
 - Access to **decent work, sustainable livelihoods and finance**. Fairer global trade agreements and national policies that prioritize women-led cooperatives and grassroots women and community agriculture are needed to build sustainable local food systems that are *regenerative and not exploitative*.
 - **Women's land rights and tenure security** as key to accelerating gender equality and women's empowerment in food systems.
 - **Investments in the care economy**. Policies to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work and to reward and represent paid care work is fundamental to transforming discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes needed not only to free up women's time for earning and food productive capacity, but also to shift the trend – increasingly witnessed during times of crisis – that women eat last and least.
 - To address inequalities, we must enhance **gender statistics and data** disaggregated by sex. More and better data are needed to ensure the accountability of governments for making progress on gender equality, women's economic empowerment and food security and nutrition.
 - And at the root of these efforts requires meaningful investment to uplift **women's and girls' voice and agency and greater participation, leadership and decision-making** in shaping food system transformation and outcomes. When women are not formally represented in leadership and decision-making processes, policies and programs are unlikely to capture and consider their needs.
- In the context of **gender inequalities**, we recommend using “inequalities” in the plural to recognise the ways in which gender inequality intersects with economic, social, political and environmental inequalities.

⁷ ActionAid, [The Vicious Cycle: Connections Between the Debt Crisis and Climate Crisis](#), Policy Brief, April 2023.