

## *CSM comments on the ToRs for the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*

### General Remarks

The Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSM) would like to welcome and wish good luck to both appointed Co-Chairs for the CFS Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment process. The CSM looks forward to the facilitation role both Co-Chairs have taken the lead on.

As a general comment, and after having actively participated in the negotiation process for the current MYPoW, we would like to express a deep concern for the framing of the ToRs which are watering down and weakening what was agreed by the CFS Plenary Session last year.

The process on this particular policy outcome, needs to represent women's organizing principles, which are open, participatory, transparent, intersectional, building on voice, experience and agency of women. Our voices and inputs need to be taken as legitimate and decisive and not marginalized and subsumed under somebody else's programmes.

Inclusiveness is a key principle of CFS and should strongly guide this joint process ahead of us, recognizing that different perspectives, expertise and forms of knowledge are the basis of our policy work and dialogue, allowing the Committee to ensure a linkage to the ground. This is one of the strongest added values of these Guidelines and their future legitimacy.

### Section A: Background and rationale

We welcome the idea of having an actionable policy outcome that can truly complement and support the landscape of many relevant normative frameworks addressing women and gender issues. The CSM's vision is to have a policy outcome that can change women's lives on the ground and believes this is a joint and common goal for all actors involved in this process. Nevertheless, this can be only done if we set the scene in a very clear way, recognizing as a starting point, that women are first of all, subjects of rights. The Guidelines should not focus only on women's role, but effectively mainstream the human rights base approach.

In this sense, we are concerned about the narrow interpretation of women's role to productive spaces, to production of food – providing a reductionist view of women's role, and women's rights. The concern relies in the document's lack of appreciation of women's rights and an overall lack of a rights-based approach towards gender equality and women empowerment, almost exclusively focusing on women's "roles" instead of "rights." Moreover, is also important to ensure LGBTQI+ persons and rights are also recognized and made visible in this document.

This major flaw becomes immediately apparent in **paragraph 3** with the closing statement "In this challenging global context, closing the gender gap and supporting women to use their full potential to achieve food security is more important than ever." Ignored is the fact that women and girls suffer more heavily from hunger and malnutrition, and instead "closing the gender gap and supporting women" is framed as a means to an end, instead of being an end in itself in the context of women's rights. With no grounding in this context, the rest of the document truly reads as though women's roles and potential are mere tools for the achievement of global food security, instead of stressing that fulfilling women's rights is essential to achieving food security. We would, therefore, suggest replacing this sentence with the following: "In this challenging global context, addressing gender inequities/inequalities and disparities and

ensuring women's rights are more important than ever to achieve food security for all". Moreover, this para should also mention the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's and girl's rights in many aspects of their live, specifically in the areas of care work.

**Paragraph 6** impair the fact that women are subjects of right on their own and they are not only means to ensure the food security and nutrition of others. The approach used by the section would indeed just deepen the structural power asymmetries and the gender assigned roles, mainly in the care and non-productive but essential spheres of lives. We would propose to shift the focus of the paragraph to emphasize that unpaid care work or social reproductive work needs to be re-distributed through strong public policies.

For **paragraph 7**, it is fundamental to recognize that women are not only a functional piece to increase productivity of the current food systems that have failed with this pandemic. Instead this section should acknowledge women as shapers and crafters of their own ways of production, such as agroecology.

The gendered impacts of food insecurity among women are tardively mentioned within the document, only addressed for the first time in **paragraphs 9 and 10**. This late mention is moreover affected by the "discriminatory barriers" against men and boys in **paragraph 10**, which diminishes the history and extent by which women and girls have faced exploitation, discrimination, and violence. Not only does this 10th paragraph imply that the limitations that men face are somehow comparable to those faced by women, it also reduces the space afforded to women by these ToRs and the subsequent Voluntary Guidelines. Gender equality is not about matching the balance or number between women and men in representation but rather having women in all their diversities including diverse genders. This is to acknowledge the historical oppressions women have experienced and the consequent need to provide affirmative actions for women to organise and exercise their human rights and power. We would, therefore, propose the following phrasing for the entire **paragraph 10**: "Overcoming gender norms to abandon the historically assigned gender roles and relations and changing towards equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities are key to benefit everybody. All actors should take joint responsibility and have an active role in this-process, recognizing, women in all their diversities, including diverse genders, women's organization and exercise of their rights, and take into account the existing power imbalances among men and women."

## Section B: Objectives of the Guidelines

The first challenge we identify is the framing of the elements related to the "Objectives" section of the document. In 2017 the CFS Plenary Session endorsed the outcomes of the High-Level Forum on Women's Empowerment, which kickstarted the current process we are about to start. CFS 44<sup>th</sup> Final Report calls on CFS to "Emphasized the importance of mainstreaming gender equality, women's and girls' rights and women's empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition in all CFS work streams, products and documents." In this sense it seems to us highly problematic that women's rights are not mentioned in the draft Objectives of the Guidelines together with the progressive realization of the Right to Food which is related to CFS vision. We urge you to ensure that the formulation of the objectives in the ToRs fully reflect the women's and girls' rights language agreed by the CFS Plenary 46 in the MYPoW 2020-2023 (paragraph 29), while incorporating the right to adequate food: "The VGs will provide Member Countries and development partners with concrete practical guidance on how to advance gender equality, women's and girls' rights, and women's empowerment as part of their efforts

to eradicate hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition, towards the progressive realization of the right to adequate food.”

## Section C: Scope of the Guidelines

### *(Paragraph 15):*

- We have dual feelings concerning this section. We welcome and strongly supports the second part from 15.5 to 15.11. Nevertheless, we find highly problematic the framing of the sections before.
- We understand that the scope of the Guidelines cannot be re-invented. It is clearly spelled out in the last bullet point of the GEWE section of the MYPoW approved and endorsed by the CFS 46<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session after a full year of negotiation. With the pandemic impacting women’s lives and rights in unprecedented ways we understand that new possible elements might need to be strengthened such as the social protection schemes and food assistance. Nevertheless, also in terms of process, it seems to us not possible to just unpack and re-formulate the scope of the guidelines in such a different direction and by pick and choose the elements to be retained while adding new ones that might not be object of thorough discussion at technical level.
- **(Section 15.1):** This Guidelines are not about women’s roles but women’s rights. Again, as mentioned above, Gender equality is not about matching the balance or number between women and men in representation but rather having women in all their diversities including diverse genders. This is to acknowledge the historical oppressions women have experienced and the consequent need to provide affirmative actions for women to organise and exercise their human rights and power.
- **(Section 15.3):** we all are experiencing this new ground, embarking in a comprehensive CFS policy convergence process without an HLPE. We are also all aware of the rich literature, expertise and knowledge on Gender and Women issues. Nevertheless, this para needs to explicit the Knowledge and expertise coming from CFS participants also and in particular the most affected constituencies in line with the HLPE methodology and principle that recognizes the plurality of knowledge.
- **(Section 15.4):** We would therefore request to substitute the current elements in para 15.4 with the elements spelled out by the pertinent MYPoW Section (last bullet point).
  - i) underlying causes of gender inequality, lack of fulfillment and protection of women’s rights, women’s disempowerment, and their impact on food security and nutrition;
  - ii) **women’s participation in decision-making and leadership;**
  - iii) access to, and control over, natural and productive resources, and access to productive services;
  - iv) **access to decent work** and markets;
  - v) **recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work;**
  - vi) women’s role in food production, utilization, commercialization, and consumption;
  - vii) **mechanisms for the elimination of violence and discrimination against women and girls;**
  - viii) enabling policies and institutional environments.
- We agree that men are fundamental actors to be fully involved and actively engaged in issues around women’s rights and gender equality, but the way this aspect is framed in this section is very problematic and we should identify better ways to do express this concept. We believe women’s active agency and leadership is at the heart of attainment of gender equality. Men

need to also address their own power and reflect on their own responsibilities to make gender equality possible. The reason for demanding increased women's participation and agency is precisely from a gendered analysis of women not being in decision making.

- We understand that the elimination of violence and discrimination against women and girls is not the mandate of CFS, but this is the main structural cause and barrier for the achievement of women's equality and empowerment as well as for their food security and nutrition. Not mentioning this element in this ToRs seems to us not acceptable.
- We would avoid a bullet point on technology, ICT based, digital and agri-innovations. Digital divide and use and purpose of data collecting, are also a specific challenge to women. Conflict of interest should also be mentioned if these elements are framed.

## Section E: Intended users | F: Process, tentative timeframe and budget estimate

### Section E: Intended users

The first sentence of **paragraph 19** is not quite clear, as people are not affected by gender equality and women's empowerment. We would, therefore, suggest removing "or are affected by" OR replacing "or are affected by" with "and are concerned about". We agree with the list of actors within the same paragraph and would like to highlight the importance of civil society and women's organisations. We would nevertheless propose to make a change on item **c)** by replacing "farmers" with "small-scale food producers", as the denomination "farmers" excludes other constituencies.

### Section F: Process, tentative timeframe and budget estimate

In **paragraph 21**, we understand that the consultation process should not be facilitated by the CFS Secretariat, but rather organized by the CFS Secretariat and facilitated by the appointed Co-Chairs.

For **paragraph 23**, we would like to emphasize the importance of the regional consultations, in general, for allowing the participation of regional constituencies, but particularly for this process since we will not count on an HLPE report. In this sense, the organization of regional consultations should not be discretionary, and we would, therefore, request to delete the footnote 12 as we understand that the fundraising for this workstream is currently ongoing. Moreover, the North American region should be included in the list, as this was also organized for the Food Systems and Nutrition Guidelines for instance.

- *(Para 25)* We would like to have more clarity about the role and purpose of the "expert meeting". In this sense we would propose to ensure that this meeting calls upon and involve all kind of expertise and knowledges, including those of the TTT, but also the knowledge and experience of women's organizations, including Indigenous Peoples, rural women, workers and small-scale food producers.

### Annex (Points for internal memo only)

- Definition of Gender Gap by the World Economic Forum, could be replaced with something from ILO. We would look deeper into that.
- On the Gender mainstreaming we would encourage you to include this definition:

*While focus is often placed on making sure that women's perspectives are reflected in planned actions, proper gender integration requires that due consideration is given also to the perspectives of men and others. It requires an analysis of how gender impacts the human rights of everyone, including LGBT and intersex persons. Gender integration goes hand in hand with the promotion and protection of women's human rights and the elimination of discrimination against women. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality:*

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/GenderIntegration.aspx>