



# COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

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**CFS FORUM ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF  
FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION**

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*This report has been presented by the Technical Task Team set up by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), in preparation for the Forum on Women’s Empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition. The task team is supported by the CFS Secretariat and comprised of technical experts from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the CFS Civil Society Mechanisms, the CFS Private Sector Mechanism, the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN), UN Women and the Rome Gender Network. The views expressed therein reflect the various perspectives on the issues discussed on the part of the task team, but they do not necessarily express those of their institutions and mechanisms.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. Gender equality and women’s empowerment are central to achieving the CFS vision to achieve food security for all, by raising levels of nutrition, improving agricultural productivity and natural resource management, and improving the lives of people in rural areas with full and equitable participation in decision-making. Without gender equality and rural women’s economic, social and political empowerment, food security will not be achieved.
2. The focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment is explicit across all the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both as a stand-alone goal – SDG 5 seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls – and as a cross-goal theme with more than 30 related targets.
3. Gender equality is a necessary foundation for a fair, peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world, and it is also a fundamental human right. Women’s empowerment is a powerful multiplier of well-being and a prerequisite for sustainable development. Unlocking the full potential of women is only possible when they are well nourished and are fully supported by their communities. Women comprise an average of 43 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, varying considerably across regions from 20 percent or less in Latin America, to 50 percent or more in parts of Asia and Africa<sup>1</sup>. Despite this regional and sub-regional variation, women make an essential contribution to agriculture across the world. However, it is estimated that 60 percent of the world’s chronically hungry people are women and girls<sup>2</sup>.
4. Across all regions, rural women face greater constraints than men regarding access to land, fertilisers, water for irrigation, seeds, technology, tools, credit, extension services, profitable cash crops, output markets and rural institutions. Women often experience discrimination in rural labour markets and tend to be responsible for the bulk of unpaid care work within their households and communities. All this significantly hampers women’s capacity to contribute to agricultural production and rural development.
5. Research shows that when women are empowered and have equal access as men to productive and financial resources, income opportunities, education and services, there is a consequent increase in agricultural output and a significant reduction in the number of poor and hungry people. An empowered woman who has access to and control over resources can influence the extent to which

<sup>1</sup> FAO, 2014 State of Food and Agriculture. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4040e.pdf> . p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> WFP, 2015 Gender Policy 2015-2020 <https://www.wfp.org/content/2015-wfp-gender-policy-2015-2020-0>

resources, specifically food, are allocated in the household, benefiting the health and nutrition outcomes of the entire family.

6. In addition to the policy recommendations on ‘Gender, Food Security and Nutrition’ endorsed at CFS 37 in 2011<sup>3</sup>, the CFS’ work on gender equality is reflected in various policy convergence products: the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT)<sup>4</sup>; and in the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS-RAI)<sup>5</sup>, gender equality and empowerment of women is the third principle, and seeks to ensure that investments in agriculture and food systems foster gender equality and the empowerment of women. Other policy tools that have included a gender lens are the Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crisis (CFS-FFA)<sup>6</sup>, the CFS recommendations on Connecting Smallholders to Markets<sup>7</sup>, as well as High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) reports and CFS policy recommendation documents entitled Water for Food Security and Nutrition<sup>8</sup>; Food Losses and Waste in the Context of Sustainable Food Systems<sup>9</sup>; and Sustainable Agricultural Development for Food Security and Nutrition: What Roles for Livestock?<sup>10</sup>

7. Following the endorsement of the CFS Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW) for 2016-2017, CFS agreed to hold a forum on women’s empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition “to discuss the challenges that remain in economic empowerment of women and help promote a shared understanding of how those issues are evolving in the agriculture and agrifood sector.”<sup>11</sup>

8. In line with the guidance provided by the MYPoW, as well as additional inputs by the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group, the ensuing Forum on Women’s Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition (referred to hereafter as ‘the Forum’) is expected to lead to the identification of:

- Challenges, gaps and barriers that hinder progress in women’s economic empowerment and the achievement of gender equality in the context of food security and nutrition;
- Experiences and good practices in the implementation of existing legal and policy frameworks, strategies and approaches, as well as practical initiatives, that address the gender gaps in the agriculture/agrifood sector and thereby contribute to women’s economic empowerment;
- Next steps for CFS to advance women’s economic empowerment, women’s rights and gender equality in the context of food security and nutrition. In particular, how the outcome of the Forum will be incorporated into the development of future CFS policies, taking into account that women’s empowerment and gender equality are prerequisites for food and nutrition security for all persons.

9. The structure of this background document mirrors the above expected outcomes and seeks to support the Forum’s discussions by providing a context analysis (Chapter 1), a thematic review of the

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-av040e.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2801e/i2801e.pdf>. The VGGT are complemented by a technical guide the “Governing Land for Men and Women”, developed by FAO, focusing on gender-equitable land governance. For more information, see: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3114e.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-au866e.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bc852e.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bq853e.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-av046e.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-av037e.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bq854e.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mo317e.pdf> (paragraphs 30–31).

challenges and examples of how they can be addressed (Chapter 2), and key learnings and policy considerations (Chapter 3).

## II. CONTEXT ANALYSIS: WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE AGRICULTURE AND AGRIFOOD SECTOR

### A. Persistent barriers and emerging challenges to women's economic empowerment

10. Empowerment, in its broadest sense, is the expansion of freedom of choice, action and people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.<sup>12</sup> It means increasing one's authority and control over the resources and decisions that affect one's life. As people exercise real choices, they gain increased control over their lives.<sup>13</sup>

11. Women's empowerment is the process by which women gain power and control over their own lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices.<sup>14</sup> The concept is closely related to that of autonomy, referring to the power and ability of each woman to make her own decisions in and for her life, and to create the conditions to put these decisions into practice.<sup>15</sup>

12. According to the UN, women's empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally. This implies that to be empowered they must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), but they must also have the agency to use these rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions.<sup>16</sup>

13. Empowerment therefore involves awareness-raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality. Empowerment is also about changing gender relations in order to enhance women's ability to shape their lives. Furthermore, the empowerment of women cannot be achieved in a vacuum; men must be involved and engaged in the process of change. Empowerment should not be seen as a zero-sum game where gains for women automatically imply losses for men.<sup>17</sup>

14. No one can empower another; only the individual can empower herself or himself to make choices or to speak out. However, institutions can support processes that can nurture self-empowerment of individuals or groups. Measures to promote the empowerment of women should facilitate women's articulation of their needs and priorities and take an active role in promoting these interests and needs.<sup>18</sup>

#### Persistent barriers

<sup>12</sup> Kabeer, Naila. 2001. "Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment." In *Discussing Women's Empowerment-Theory and Practice*. Sida Studies No. 3. Novum Grafiska AB: Stockholm.

<sup>13</sup> FAO. Forthcoming. *Developing capacities in gender-sensitive rural advisory services. Training of trainers manual*. Rome.

<sup>14</sup> FAO. 2017. *Strengthening Sector Policies for Better Food Security and Nutrition Results. Gender Equality*. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7218e.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Written submission of the CFS Civil Society Mechanism

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.un.org/popin/unfpa/taskforce/guide/iatfwemp.gdl.html>

<sup>17</sup> UN Women online glossary

<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=E&sortkey=&sortorder>

<sup>18</sup> UN Women online glossary

<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=E&sortkey=&sortorder>

15. Across the world, gender inequality persists – including in so-called ‘developed’ countries – undermining progress across the SDGs. Most pertinently, progress in the eradication of hunger and poverty, which lies at the centre of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is intimately linked to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.<sup>19</sup> In this context, barriers that women face working in the agriculture and agrifood sector significantly undermine their human rights, as well as hindering agricultural productivity globally by an estimated 20 to 30 percent<sup>20</sup> and adversely impacting on women’s food security. The same barriers contribute to adverse effects at the household level, as economic disempowerment of women negatively impacts their health and nutrition and that of their children<sup>21</sup>, and contributes to keeping households trapped in situations of food insecurity and malnourishment.

16. Gender discriminatory social norms, practices and roles lie at the heart of gender inequality.<sup>22</sup> These norms – often particularly entrenched in rural contexts – shape the gendered distribution of paid and unpaid work (with women often spending a disproportionate amount of their time on unpaid care activities); limit women's access to assets, productive resources and markets; and undermine the self-confidence and leadership potential of women..

17. Women working in the agriculture and agrifood sector are further disadvantaged by gendered patterns in access to markets, to services such as financial services (see Box 1), to training and to maternity protection.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, opportunities to advocate for women’s rights are limited by unequal representation in farmers' organizations and in decision-making processes at all levels. Progress has been limited by a lack of political commitment to advance the rights of women and, all too often, limited resource allocation for groups, organizations and movements dedicated to advancing women's rights. This has also contributed to a failure to protect women against all forms of violence. Alarmingly, there is an increase in the prosecution and persecution of women leaders working to promote gender equality.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>World Bank, FAO & IFAD. 2009. Gender and food security. In: Gender in agriculture sourcebook. Washington, D.C., and World Bank; Asian Development Bank. 2013. Gender equality and food security—women’s empowerment as a tool against hunger. Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank.

<sup>20</sup> FAO. 2011. The state of food and agriculture 2010-2011. Rome, FAO.

<sup>21</sup> Van den Bold, M., A.R. Quisumbing & S. Gillespie. 2013. Women's empowerment and nutrition: an evidence review. IFPRI Discussion Paper 01294. Washington D.C., IFPRI.

<sup>22</sup> FAO, IFAD & ILO. 2010. Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: differentiated pathways out of poverty. Rome, FAO.

<sup>23</sup> World Bank. 2007. World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development. Washington D.C., World Bank.

<sup>24</sup> The number of killings of women leaders reported to Front Line Defenders in 2016 represented an increase from the number of killings reported in the previous year. 281 women leaders were murdered in 25 countries, four of whom were working to defend land, Indigenous and environmental rights.

**Box 1: Women’s struggle against drought-induced indebtedness and microfinance companies in Karnataka, India**

This case study documents the experiences of rural women (farmers and farm workers) in the district of Haveri in Karnataka, India, where women make up the majority of the agricultural labour force and yet own just 20 percent of the land.

With persistent drought lasting more than a decade and leading to significant crop failure, local farmers have been unable to repay loans to microfinance organisations operating in the region. Despite the launch of government-sponsored women’s self-help groups, aiming to help improve financial conditions for women, women in Haveri continue to struggle with indebtedness, while dealing with aggressive tactics harassment from microfinance companies. This experience is not specific to Haveri, but is spread out across the state of Karnataka with women from different parts of the region reporting similar experiences. Haveri is taken as one specific case study.

For more information, see: <http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Proposal-for-Case-study-KRRS-LVC.pdf>

**Global trends and emerging challenges for women's empowerment in the agriculture and agrifood sector**

18. Urbanization, higher incomes, growing demand for food and expanding private investment in agriculture is creating new economic opportunities for some actors working across agrifood systems. Greater connectivity and dynamism – especially through the growth of intermediate towns as centres for access to markets and service provision – are offering new and wider market opportunities for smallholders in local, national and international markets. This might offer new opportunities, although in a context of widespread and persisting gender inequality and discrimination, and in the absence of measures to address these issues, it is far from certain that women will benefit. At the same time, it is important to recognize that local and largely informal markets continue to play a key role in the food security and livelihoods of the majority of women and men who are small-scale actors in food systems. Given this, it is an unfortunate reality that policies and regulations often discriminate against small-scale actors, many of whom are women.

19. Women are more likely to carry out unpaid work, given gender disparities in household workloads and access to formal labour markets. Likewise, due to gendered patterns in the workplace, women are often the subjects of discrimination and exploitation.<sup>25</sup> Notably, there are concerns that some large-scale agricultural investments – often resulting in the transfer of tenure rights to private actors – have been shown to adversely affect women’s livelihoods, employment opportunities, and access to and control over natural resources and food systems, often resulting in forced migration and a worsening of women’s living conditions. Thus, women worldwide have very often lost out in the

<sup>25</sup> FAO, IFAD & ILO. 2010. Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: differentiated pathways out of poverty. Rome, FAO.

face of land tenure changes, large-scale rural development schemes, and through traditional land titling programmes (see example in Box 2).

**Box 2: Women’s access to and control over natural resources – the case of the Community Council of Palenque Monte Oscuro, Colombia**

The Community Council of Palenque Monte Oscuro (CCPMO) located in the town of Puerto Tejada Cauca, Colombia, consists of 50 families of African descent (around 340 people). These families face violations of their right to food due to restrictions of their access to land by large-scale development projects, mainly related to the expansion of the agro-industrial sugarcane sector. The community is traditionally rural, with strong roots in the territory – exercised through the collective ownership of land – and productive activities aimed toward self-sustainability for food supplies, which has become difficult to continue in this context. In particular, the right to adequate food and nutrition for women in the CCCPMO has been impaired because they do not have safeguards for agricultural production and growing adequate food with their own seeds. Meanwhile, women there do not possess individual or collective land titles. The State does not provide any protections to ensure the transfer of traditional knowledge, of which women are the primary holders, thus the survival of their culture is endangered. Furthermore, women do not have sufficient financial capacity to purchase culturally and nutritionally adequate food and do not enjoy adequate access to drinking water, since water sources are heavily polluted by industrial waste and by-products of agricultural chemical sprays.

The CCCPMO has been demanding secure access to their lands since 2004 and has since been allotted small plots of land by state authorities. However, the implementation of these decisions has been slow and the families have been repeatedly displaced from some of the lands that were allocated to them. The CCCPMO has used the CFS’ Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in their advocacy, and the women of the CCCPMO have presented their case to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which has issued recommendations regarding the elimination of barriers to women’s access to land and natural resources.

For more information see: <http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Palenque.pdf> (in Spanish)

20. Increased commercialization, value chain integration and connectivity of smallholders to markets can lead to economic empowerment of women, where policies and projects systematically integrate and address gender considerations. However, as has proved to be the case too often, when these conditions are not met, women are frequently excluded from commercial activities, tending to focus their time on traditional gender roles in own-consumption crops and household activities. Further, where commercial agriculture is focused around larger-scale, industrial models based on extractive and unsustainable models of production, concerns for women working in such environments – related to employment conditions, health effects and the vulnerability of women to violence – can undermine any benefits in terms of the potential empowerment of women created by such labour opportunities.

21. Greater rural-urban connectivity and more dynamic interactions between places of living across the rural-urban continuum is increasing the incidence of various types of seasonal, circular, temporary and long-term migration.<sup>26</sup> In the case of migration by men, this results in greater autonomy for the women who stay behind, better access for them to productive resources, and the presence of remittances. While these emerge as potential benefits of migration by men, these are counterbalanced

<sup>26</sup> Tacoli, C and Agergaard, J. 2017. Urbanization, rural transformations and food systems: the role of small towns. IIED, London.

against the likelihood of increased workloads and family disunity. The migration of women – who already account for 48 percent of international migrants<sup>27</sup> – is increasing in many contexts due to the availability of jobs in sectors such as domestic care and tourism, and potentially leads to economic empowerment opportunities through access to generally higher paying urban employment. However, the extent to which women migrants are able to benefit from these opportunities is constrained by gender biases in labour markets, plus lower wages, lower levels of literacy and lower education than men, as well as limited access to services and earnings in the context of informal enterprises.<sup>28</sup> The vulnerability of women migrants to trafficking, and to violence – in particular in the context of migration and displacement driven by conflicts – continue to be particular concerns. In some countries and regions of the world, persisting barriers are further exacerbated by the impact of protracted crises and climate change on the livelihood strategies of rural populations. As a consequence, women might find themselves increasingly vulnerable to conflicts, violence and rapid depletion of natural resources, and thus unable to exercise their rights.

## **B. Global policy framework for women's empowerment and gender equality**

22. A number of normative policy frameworks at the international level promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. These include legally binding international human rights treaties<sup>29</sup> and other legally binding international conventions<sup>30</sup> that states are obligated to uphold. States that ratify these international treaties assume obligations and duties under international law to respect, protect and fulfil human rights as they relate to gender equality. To do this, states must adjust their regulatory frameworks in order to comply with international treaties, which implies removing any reservations, practices, and measures from domestic policies and laws that are inconsistent with the treaties' objectives, and/or taking positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights.

23. The equal rights of men and women are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a fundamental human right. Other international human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), set specific provisions to promote the rights of women and specifically those of rural women.

24. Article 3 and Article 11 of the ICESCR require states to ensure that women have access to, or control over, means of food production, and to actively address customary practices under which women are not allowed to eat until the men are fully fed, or are only allowed less nutritious food<sup>31</sup>.

25. The CEDAW<sup>32</sup> is particularly relevant for the empowerment of women and improved food security and nutrition. Adopted in 1979 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. Though all the treaty provisions apply to rural women, it is the only international human rights instrument that includes specific provisions regarding rural women's rights in its Article 14. Besides articulating the responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil women's basic human rights (such as education, housing, sanitation and health care), CEDAW specifically calls on states to contribute to the empowerment of rural women through respecting and enforcing their rights as they relate to their productive capacity. These include the right to access agricultural extension services,

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2016. International migration report 2015: Highlights. New York, United Nations.

<sup>28</sup> Chant, S. 2013. Cities through a gender lens: A golden "urban age" for women in the global south? *Environment and Urbanization*. 25: 9-29. London: International Institute for Environment and Development.

<sup>29</sup> For a full list of the Core International Human Rights Instruments and their monitoring bodies, see: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CoreInstruments.aspx>

<sup>30</sup> For example, the ILO conventions. For more information on the ILO conventions and recommendations, see <http://ilo.org/global/standards/introduction-to-international-labour-standards/conventions-and-recommendations/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>31</sup> General Comment No. 16 on the Equal rights of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/docs/CESCR-GC16-2005.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> To read CEDAW in full, visit: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

economic opportunities, productive assets, improved technologies, financial services, and the right to participate individually or collectively in agriculture and rural development planning. States that have ratified CEDAW<sup>33</sup> undertake to plan and implement measures to combat discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development. States have the obligation to consider the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles they play in the economic survival of their families.

26. To orient national policy and action, in March 2016 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) adopted a General Recommendation No. 34 (GR 34) on the rights of rural women<sup>34</sup>. GR 34 recognizes the significant contributions that rural women make in reducing poverty, hunger and malnutrition, and in promoting social and economic development. GR 34 provides strategic and practical guidance to states on their obligations for enhancing rural women's empowerment at the policy and programme levels in order to achieve improved food security and nutrition. It also contains many progressive provisions related to the rights of rural women, and places a strong emphasis on their role in achieving food security and reducing poverty, malnutrition and hunger.

27. Concerning women's empowerment through decent rural and agricultural employment, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has four key gender equality conventions<sup>35</sup> (including Convention No. 100, No. 111, No. 156 and No. 183) and at least four additional relevant conventions (see Box 3). Although the latter are not gender equality focused per se, all of them include specific provisions to address the needs, promote the role and ensure the rights of women (see Box 3).

28. In 1994, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 189 countries unanimously adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action<sup>36</sup>. As a road map for advancing women's rights and defining a framework for change, this made comprehensive commitments under 12 critical areas of concern for women's empowerment. It included recommendations for advancing women's food security under the strategic objectives on macroeconomic and development policies (strategic objective A1), economic resources (strategic objective A2), vocational training and continuing education (strategic objective B3), health (strategic objective C1), economic rights and access to employment (strategic objective F1), access to resources, employment, markets and trade (strategic objective F2) and sustainable development (strategic objective K2). States have been called upon to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

**Box 3: ILO conventions relevant to gender equality and rural women's empowerment**

- Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111)
- Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156)
- Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183)
- Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention (No. 11)
- Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention (No. 129)
- Rural Workers' Organizations Convention (No. 141)
- Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention (No. 184)

<sup>33</sup> 189 states have ratified CEDAW. (Last update: 20 June 2016). For more information, visit [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/OHCHR\\_Map\\_CEDAW.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/OHCHR_Map_CEDAW.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> For the General Recommendation 34, visit

[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/GC/34&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/GC/34&Lang=en)

<sup>35</sup> Key areas of intervention include: getting rural women into formal employment, improving their labour conditions, reducing the gender pay gap, increasing women's participation in workers' associations and related policy and decision-making processes, and enhancing women's social protection coverage. ABC of women workers' rights and gender equality. ILO 2007. Geneva. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/--gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_087314.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/--gender/documents/publication/wcms_087314.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> To read the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, visit: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

29. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002)<sup>37</sup>, is the first global agreement that recognizes elderly people as contributors to the development of their societies, and which commits governments to include ageing in all social and economic development policies, including food security programmes.<sup>38</sup> It stresses that older women in rural areas are particularly vulnerable and calls for action to improve living conditions and infrastructure in rural areas. Recommendations include giving priority to older women in rural areas by strengthening their capacity through access to financial and infrastructure services, training for improved farming techniques and technologies, and income-generating opportunities.

30. Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls has also become a stand-alone goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, unanimously adopted by the 193 member states of the UN on 27 September 2015. Target 5.A of SDG 5 recognizes that reforms are needed to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources. In addition, SDG 1 and SDG 2 also include targets (targets 1.4 and 2.3) that aim to enhance women's access to productive resources, as a precondition for ending poverty and hunger and achieving food security and improved nutrition. Likewise, SDG 8 focuses on achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including equal pay for work of equal value, protection of labour rights and the promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers, also encompassing women migrants and those in precarious employment situations. Governments have assumed the primary responsibility for the implementation and review of the SDGs at the national, regional and global levels, in relation to the progress made in implementing the SDGs and related targets over the coming fifteen years.

31. In the context of food security and nutrition, governments also express their support to the achievement of equality between women and men and the empowerment of women through voluntary guidelines, declarations and strategic frameworks for action.<sup>39</sup> These recognize that the full and equal participation of men and women is essential for achieving food security for all, and acknowledge the fundamental contribution to achieving food security and adequate nutrition made by women. Governments also make specific policy recommendations to promote women's full and equal participation in agriculture and the rural economy through women's empowerment and enhanced access to productive and other socio-economic resources.

### **C. Policy implementation gaps**

32. By ratifying international human rights treaties and conventions, governments agree to put into place domestic policy measures, legislation and other actions compatible with treaty obligations and duties to provide the enabling environment needed for women's empowerment and the principal legal protection of women's rights guaranteed under international law.

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<sup>37</sup> To read the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, visit <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ageing/MIPAA/political-declaration-en.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> While today the overwhelming proportion of older persons in developed countries live in areas classified as urban, the majority of older persons in developing countries live in rural areas. Trends suggest that in the future, rural areas of many developing countries will see a larger population of older persons. (Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> The most relevant instruments are the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGTs), the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (VGSSF), the Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security, the CFS-RAI Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems of the Committee for World Food Security (CFS), and the CFS-FFA Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises.

33. Yet, the ratification of a treaty does not guarantee its adequate implementation at the national level. Despite the political commitment at the international level to empower women, implementation at the national level often lags behind.

34. The number of countries that ratified the relevant treaties vary to a great extent (see Box 4). For example, while CEDAW and ICESCR are nearly universal, several of the relevant ILO conventions have only been ratified by a small number of states. In the case of the ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and tribal people, 25 years since its adoption, only 22 countries have ratified it to date. This means that its provisions currently cover less than 15 per cent of the world's Indigenous peoples.<sup>40</sup>

35. Even in countries that have ratified Convention 169, this has not yet generated the results aimed for, and its effective implementation remains a challenge. Indigenous and tribal peoples continue to suffer disproportionately from poverty and human rights violations, including forced and child labour. Major challenges persist in relation to the protection of Indigenous peoples' collective rights to land and natural resources. Indigenous women are in a particularly vulnerable situation, as they suffer simultaneously from the effects of both gender and ethnic discrimination. The reasons for the gaps in the implementation of Convention 169 are manifold. In some ratifying countries, Convention 169 has very limited visibility, and government officials as well as Indigenous representatives are often unaware of its provisions and potential. Often, notwithstanding the emphasis of Convention 169 on consultation and participation, its ratification has not been complemented by the establishment of effective dialogue and consultation mechanisms: Indigenous and tribal peoples therefore were not offered real opportunities to make their voices heard.<sup>41</sup>

36. Such implementation challenges at the country level and incoherence between international and national policies and laws mostly result from:<sup>42</sup>

- a lack or limited understanding of women's human rights and the obligations specifically outlined by the different treaties;
- limited political will to take action to secure women's rights;
- limited awareness and understanding among national policy-makers of the relevance of gender equality for achieving sustainable development outcomes, such as food security and nutrition;

**Box 4: Selected international treaties & conventions - number of ratifications**

- ICESCR – 165
- CEDAW – 189
- Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100) – 173
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111) – 174
- Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156) – 44
- Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183) – 32
- Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention (No. 129) – 53
- Rural Workers' Organizations Convention (No. 141) – 40
- Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention (No. 184) – 16

Sources: OHCHR,  
[http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBoD/CEDAW/OHCHR\\_Map\\_CEDAW.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBoD/CEDAW/OHCHR_Map_CEDAW.pdf)  
[http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBoD/ICESCR/OHCHR\\_Map\\_ICESCR.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBoD/ICESCR/OHCHR_Map_ICESCR.pdf)  
 and ILO NORMLEX, Information System on International Labour Standards (accessed on 22 May 2017)

<sup>40</sup> Further data on the ratifications of this convention are available on the ILO website:

[http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11300:0::NO:11300:P11300\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312314](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11300:0::NO:11300:P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:312314)

<sup>41</sup> Summary of discussions, Seminar on enabling rights-based development for indigenous and tribal peoples: Learning from 25 years' experience of ILO Convention No. 169 Geneva, 27-28 November 2014. Available online at: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_339137.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_339137.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> FAO. 2002. ILC 2013. NGO-CEDAW and CAMBOW 2011. OECD No Date. UN Economic and Social Council. 2014. UN Women Asia and the Pacific. No date.

- a lack of capacity to implement and monitor voluntary or legally binding international agreements;
- discriminatory laws and unfavourable institutional structures and processes, and/or gender-blind national development plans and strategies;
- a lack of resources to develop and implement national action plans on women's empowerment, or to ensure the set-up or the proper functioning of national institutional mechanisms targeting women;
- weak civil society when it comes to supporting women so that they are able claim their rights.

37. At the same time, even when gender equitable legislation and policies are in place, their implementation can be hindered by cultural factors. Deeply rooted social norms and attitudes can shape the roles and responsibilities of women and men in family life and in society, as well as their access to rights and opportunities, which compounds women's disadvantaged position in the public and private spheres.<sup>43</sup> Such cultural factors, as in the case of the agriculture and agrifood sector, partly explain the low representation of women in decision-making positions in relevant institutions such as agriculture-related ministries, research and extension, and parliamentary committees.<sup>44</sup>

38. Over the past two decades, even in countries that have witnessed an impressive increase in female participation in decision-making bodies, the policies and measures adopted at the country level to promote women's economic and political empowerment and reforms of formal legislation have not been sufficient in transforming the prevailing sociocultural norms that undermine female voices and leadership in policy processes or the stereotyped vision of women's subordinate role within society.<sup>45</sup>

39. Today, there are still 155 countries that have at least one law that limits women's economic opportunities, while 100 countries place restrictions on the types of jobs women can do and 18 allow husbands to decide whether their wives can work at all.<sup>46</sup> However, even in countries where openly gender-discriminatory laws have been formally eliminated, the implementation of such policies is lagging behind due to entrenched stereotypes, social tolerance for discrimination and the lack of explicit anti-discrimination laws to ensure policy enforcement.

40. By making information, new technologies, skills, knowledge and services more relevant and accessible to women, **agricultural extension and rural advisory services** can help them to increase their yields, connect with markets, and take advantage of economic and entrepreneurship opportunities. However, social norms and attitudes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men are among the reasons why women tend to have even less access than men to agricultural extension and rural advisory services in developing economies. These norms and attitudes define women's time availability, mobility, educational attainment and representation, and thus also determine the possibility for women to benefit at all from these services. Practical implementation problems also endure on the side of service providers, both at the individual and institutional levels. At the individual level, the fact that service providers often fail to recognize women as legitimate clients and to effectively reach out to them results in women being underserved by advisory services. In addition, service providers too often lack the knowledge and capacity needed to target women effectively with relevant information. At the institutional level, the factors that impede the implementation of relevant international treaties (e.g. CEDAW Article 14, paragraph 2 (d)), include gender-blind or gender-discriminatory organizational culture, which results in biased decision-making, targeting, employment of staff and service delivery modalities and content.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> OECD No date. UN Women Asia and the Pacific.

<sup>44</sup> The proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments is 23.3 percent globally. Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2017.

<sup>45</sup> Economic Commission for Africa. 2014. Twenty-Year Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) + 20. Africa Regional Review Summary Report.

<sup>46</sup> World Bank. 2016. Women, Business and the Law. Getting to Equal.

<sup>47</sup> Petrics, et al. 2015. Enhancing the potential of family farming for poverty reduction and food security through gender-sensitive rural advisory services. Occasional Papers on Innovation in Family Farming. FAO. Rome.

41. Considering **land governance**, in recent decades, national laws have increasingly aligned with international standards to support gender equality.<sup>48</sup> Yet, major gaps still persist. Problems can endure at the institutional level even when statutory reforms are passed. Law reform processes may be incomplete, either because statutory frameworks are not followed up with well-drafted regulations for implementation, or because the reforms may only target one sector, failing to address discrimination in other areas of the legal framework (for instance, laws on the family, marriage, property and personal status and land registration) leading to incoherence and ambiguity when it comes to implementation by land officials. Furthermore, progressive legal reforms are not always followed up by the long-term and continuous efforts needed to ensure proper implementation and enforcement.<sup>49</sup> One principal impediment is the limited understanding of legal reforms among land officials and populations, as well as traditional practices and norms that contradict progressive legal provisions. Other important factors impeding the implementation of progressive land laws include low levels of knowledge and access to justice for women to claim their land rights, women's lack of involvement in decision-making processes around land and wider gender discrimination in sociocultural and political relations. An additional and critical barrier is the ongoing lack of adequate financial and human resources to implement progressive law reforms.<sup>50</sup>

42. Regarding women's access to **financial services**, constraints that impede policy implementation include both sociocultural norms and legal barriers. Norms that create time and mobility constraints for women; the fact that in some countries women are required to provide specific permissions or documentation that can be challenging to obtain; the prejudice among financial institutions that leads to viewing women as less attractive clients than men; and the limited physical outreach of financial institutions in rural areas all limit women's opportunities for interaction with formal financial institutions.<sup>51</sup>

43. Legal barriers that discriminate against women, in terms of ownership and inheritance rights, limit women's access to land or property and results in a lack of assets considered by financial institutions to be acceptable for use as collateral.<sup>52</sup> Laws should also explicitly provide adequate and effective **maternity protection** coverage to workers in fields that are frequently excluded from such coverage (including workers in agriculture), small and medium-sized enterprises and self-employed workers (including contributing family workers)<sup>53</sup>. Discriminatory legislation, such as national labour

<sup>48</sup> For example, only two countries out of the 25 that have undertaken the FAO Legal Assessment Tool (LAT) do not have the indicator "The law recognizes gender equality in the right to own or control property regardless of the type of marriage" in their legal and policy framework. For more information, see: [http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/legislation-assessment-tool/indicators/en/?sta\\_id=960](http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/legislation-assessment-tool/indicators/en/?sta_id=960)

See also Helle Ravnborg, Rachel Spichiger, Rikke Brandt Broegaard and Ramsmus Hundsbaek Pedersen "Land Governance, Gender Equality and Development: Past Achievements and Remaining Challenges" 28 *Journal of International Development* (2016) 412-426. Examining gender equality in land governance for 15 countries in detail, Ravnborg et al. (2016) noted that 13 of the 15 considered have, over recent decades, passed legislation that contains provisions for equal opportunities for men and women in terms of land rights.

<sup>49</sup> Helle Ravnborg, Rachel Spichiger, Rikke Brandt Broegaard and Ramsmus Hundsbaek Pedersen "Land Governance, Gender Equality and Development: Past Achievements and Remaining Challenges" 28 *Journal of International Development* (2016) 412-426.

<sup>50</sup> IB Karikari, J Stilwell and S Carver "The application of GIS in the lands sector of a developing country: challenges facing land administrators in Ghana." *International Journal of Geographical Information Science*, 19(5) (2005), 343-362; RH Pedersen and S Haule, "Women, donors and land administration: the Tanzania case." Danish Institute for International Studies, Working Paper 19 (2013). Further, in Uganda, many of the land administration and land dispute settlement institutions prescribed by the Land Act do not even exist: M Rugadya "Escalating land conflicts in Uganda. A review of evidence from recent studies and surveys." *The International Republican Institute and The Uganda Round Table Foundation* (2009).

<sup>51</sup> Hernandez, E., Ciacci, R., Benni, N. & Kaaria, S. Forthcoming. Women smallholders: the next frontier in financial inclusions. Joint CGAP-FAO publication.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> ILO.2016. Women at Work. Trends 2016. Geneva.

codes, that excludes men from having the right to leave for caring for a child<sup>54</sup> perpetuates traditional gender roles and makes it difficult to increase men's engagement in family responsibilities. This engagement would lighten women's unpaid workload and thus give women more of a chance to invest in their own training and education or to engage in income-generating activities in the agriculture and agrifood sector.

In other cases, the gap in implementation is due to the lack of adequate strategies and policy measures, for example in the case of the **gender wage gap**.<sup>55</sup> The main reasons behind the gender wage gap include sectoral and occupational segregation, women's overrepresentation in low-wage jobs and in part-time workers, long working hours carried out by women and the expectation of long working hours, and the motherhood penalty and fatherhood bonus<sup>56</sup>. These are all gender-specific barriers and therefore require specific policy interventions beyond those aimed at promoting economic growth and the efficiency of labour markets<sup>57</sup>

44. In other instances, national employment policies generally do not explicitly address the main challenges related to female employment (such as segregation, pay gap, lack of access to pension systems or caretaking services) nor are they complemented by interventions and policy measures to enable women to reconcile paid work and unpaid care responsibilities<sup>58</sup>. Unpaid care work, though essential to sustaining society and economic development, remains too often invisible and unrecognized in national policy frameworks. Women are responsible for most of the unpaid care work undertaken, which includes all non-remunerated activities, such as caring for the household, cooking, cleaning, collecting water and firewood as well as caring for the ill, elderly and children. The invisibility of women's unpaid care work, and thus women's poverty, is perpetuated by its exclusion from national accounts, gross domestic product, and by failing to prioritize public services that could help reduce and redistribute unpaid care responsibilities.

#### **D. Conditions for the implementation of policy and legal frameworks**

45. Concerns over the lack of incorporation of agreed international frameworks into national policy are not without justification in many contexts. In addition to the need for greater political will at the national and local levels, greater engagement with international debates and frameworks within local contexts is required, including the provision of tools to enable the implementation of relevant international policies by national actors. This is a precondition for the successful implementation of international policy frameworks promoting women's economic empowerment, and the realization of their rights.<sup>for</sup>

46. Even where constructive policies are in place that acknowledge gender equality in laws and regulations, implementation requires that social attitudes, norms and beliefs do not contribute to gendered barriers in practice, in terms of accessing rights and opportunities. In some contexts, for example, even where women enjoy the same rights as men in terms of inheritance and land ownership,

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<sup>54</sup> ILO 2012. Good practices and challenges on the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) and the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156): A comparative study. Working paper 2/2012.

<sup>55</sup> While in some countries the gender wage gap has decreased over time, it is estimated that, worldwide, women's wages are approximately 77 percent of those earned by men (ILO, 2016. Women at Work. Trends 2016. Geneva.).

<sup>56</sup> Motherhood penalty and fatherhood bonus refers to the pay gap related to parenthood where for most men fatherhood results in a wage bonus and for most women motherhood results in a wage penalty. This is the result of persisting discrimination in the world of work against women with children compared to single men, fathers, childless women and unmarried women.

<sup>57</sup> ILO.2016. Women at Work. Trends 2016. Geneva.

<sup>58</sup> UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. 2015. Regional review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

in practice outcomes are deeply gender biased as a result of prevailing sociocultural norms, which result in land and property often passing down through male relatives.<sup>59</sup>

47. Transformative approaches must be grounded in institutional mechanisms and require horizontal and vertical coordination in order to change society-wide norms, practices and outcomes in relation to gender equality. The existence of an adequately resourced institutional setting targeting women at the national level is a critical implementation condition. In the context of the review of UN Women's Beijing + 20 action platform on gender equality, all participating countries reported the existence of some sort of national gender machinery (stand-alone gender ministries, gender and equality commissions, focal points in relevant ministries). Obviously, their mere existence is not sufficient; gender-related institutional mechanisms must also be equipped with adequate financial and human resources, and be vested with authority and a clear mandate to be able to influence relevant policy and decision-making processes. Ensuring that national women's ministries or other mechanisms are located at the highest possible level of government, for example, can be crucial to mobilizing political will and obtaining support from the rest of government.<sup>60</sup>

48. In this respect, cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial collaboration to raise the profile of gender equality in food security and nutrition policies and strategies for agriculture development and the agrifood sector is imperative. So too is gender resourcing, including budgeting, and systematic gender awareness and capacity building among government officers and key stakeholders that influence national policy agendas. Generating and disseminating evidence about gender gaps in productive and income-generating opportunities in agriculture, and how addressing these could contribute to achieving food security and nutrition – noting that greater control of household resources for women generally benefits health and nutrition outcomes of the entire family - can also help to raise the profile of gender equality and expand the opportunity for policy change. Equally important, on the legal side, is the need for strengthening the legal and quasi-legal complaint and recourse mechanisms for the effective protection of women's rights.

49. The engagement of women working in the agriculture and agrifood sector in policy and planning processes at all levels will be essential to facilitate gender equitable outcomes in policy and practice.<sup>61</sup> As such, support for women's groups and associations to organize and more effectively negotiate in decision-making processes is a priority. To enable women leaders to fulfil this role, more needs to be done to engage and strengthen women's associations at local, national and regional levels across feminist movements, grass-root organizations and in national policy processes and dialogue. This means working with women and men at all levels, from the national down to local and household levels, to facilitate awareness of the importance of women's voices and their work. Transformative change – supported by shifts away from gender unequal and discriminatory norms – needs both change at the highest levels of government as well as at the lowest.

### III. ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

50. This section provides a more in-depth overview of the challenges to women's empowerment as well as strategies that seek to overcome these challenges with respect to four main thematic areas identified as highly relevant in the context of the agriculture and agrifood sector:

1. Women's participation in decision-making, public policies, partnerships and leadership ro
2. Women's access to and control over land, natural resources, inputs and productive tools;

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<sup>59</sup> World Bank, FAO & IFAD. 2009. Gender issues in land policy and administration. In: Gender in agriculture sourcebook. Washington, D.C., World Bank.

<sup>60</sup> UN Women. 2015. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action turns 20. New York.

<sup>61</sup> World Bank, FAO & IFAD. 2009. Gender and agricultural livelihoods: strengthening governance. In: Gender in agriculture sourcebook. Washington, D.C., World Bank.

3. Women's access to decent working conditions and adequate wages;
4. Women's capacities to access markets.

51. Each thematic area is introduced by an overview of the main issues affecting women's empowerment followed by the presentation of a number of concrete experiences. Experiences were submitted and selected by the members of the Technical Task Team set up by CFS to support the preparation of the Forum on the basis of their relevance to the issues covered by CEDAW GR 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women as well as on their ability to show the diversity of perspectives and approaches.

#### **A. Women's participation in decision-making, public policies, partnerships and leadership roles**

52. It is problematic to promote economic empowerment of women working in the agriculture and agrifood sector in a context where rural women are largely absent from decision-making processes at all levels of society.

53. At the household level, this means key decisions on the distribution of household work, access to productive resources, and engagement in income-generating activities are often solely the domain of male household heads. In a context of gender differentiated livelihood strategies within households – with women and men often pursuing livelihoods independently of each other - this has serious implications for the type of work women are involved in and the distribution of economic benefits associated with household activities generally. At higher community, local and national levels of governance, the absence of rural women's voices from planning and decision-making processes is an impediment to the design and implementation of policies geared at addressing the gendered challenges that rural women face.

54. The engagement of food producer organizations and farmer cooperatives in development initiatives and policy processes has been widely identified as an important avenue for the economic empowerment of farmers across the board. Yet it is still the case that women are too often either absent from these groups or included in such a manner that they have limited opportunities to influence decision-making processes. Along with the related lack of access to assets and productive resources, this limits women's potential to engage in commercial partnerships and to influence the conditions of those partnerships in which they are involved.

55. Given these realities, the absence of effective women's rights civil society movements in some countries – and the marginalization and persecution of those advocating for women's rights – is of particular concern. Certainly, these organizations would need to be engaged and empowered in order to bring about transformative changes to gender relations, including in underlying sociocultural norms, which strongly contribute to many of the constraints to women's empowerment in the agriculture and agrifood sector. Women's enhanced participation and leadership in public and private life is central to addressing key challenges related to food security and nutrition, in particular of children and infants, as well as to gendered patterns of exploitation and violence that are often prevalent in traditional rural societies.

56. Addressing these issues and galvanizing women's voices and leadership to promote change requires coordinated action across multiple fronts and levels. This includes transforming cultural norms and attitudes, providing relevant training to women and their organizations, engaging women in producer organizations and creating safe spaces in policy processes for women to advocate for the realization of their rights.

#### **Examples:**

##### **1. Household Methodologies to enhance women's participation in decision-making**

57. Household methodologies are participatory methodologies that enable family members to work together to improve relations and decision-making, and to achieve more equitable workloads. Their purpose is to strengthen the overall well-being of the household and empower all its members to achieve their development potential and create stronger, more resilient and sustainable smallholder farming and rural livelihoods systems.

58. Household methodologies build on a growing understanding that, in many parts of the world, households are not cohesive units with shared needs, resources, benefits and goals. Rather, women and men in the same household often pursue separate livelihoods and are responsible for different production and consumption activities. Women usually have fewer productive assets than men and are less able to make independent economic decisions about their enterprises and the use of the income they generate. They are often overburdened with productive work, domestic chores and caring tasks, while men often feel burdened by their responsibility as heads of the household. These inequalities hinder the general motivation of household members and their ability to make productivity gains and develop effective businesses, which adversely affect their ability to achieve food, nutrition and income security.

59. The household methodologies work within the “black box” of a household. They enable all household members to identify and overcome obstacles and to make the most of available opportunities in order to improve their lives. The way these methodologies work is to get household members to sit together – husband, wife, children – to come up with a common vision: what are they trying to achieve and where would they like to be in three or five years’ time? Then they analyse where they are now. Why have they not yet reached their vision?

60. As part of this process, household members come to realize that inequalities in gender roles and relations can be part of the reason that they remain poor. The creation of the vision motivates family members to work together for a common future, and the examining of where they are at present becomes the means by which they can then understand how to move towards the future and achieve their common goals. Hence, a household’s ability to understand the causes of their current situation – and their willingness to act upon the findings – is crucial for unlocking a household’s potential.

For more information, see:

[https://www.ifad.org/topic/household\\_methodologies/overview/tags/knowledge\\_notes](https://www.ifad.org/topic/household_methodologies/overview/tags/knowledge_notes)

## **2. Empowering women through producer organizations**

61. An analysis by Twin – a non-governmental organization (NGO) working with producer organizations across Latin America, Asia and Africa – on the role played by women farmers in coffee, cocoa and nut value chains documents innovative initiatives to address gender imbalances in access to economic opportunities.

62. Twin highlights that, owing to the significant (and often under-appreciated) role of women within agrifood and agricultural activities, any business sourcing agricultural ingredients from smallholder producers will inevitably owe a huge debt to women. There is potential for business to play a transformative role in strengthening gender justice within their value chains, while themselves benefiting from such targeted interventions. In this regard, producer organizations represent a strategic entry point. Partnerships between producer organizations, development agencies, private actors and governments should prioritize the advancement of gender justice through:

- Developing and implementing gender policies that formalise producer organisations’ commitment to gender justice and have the potential to generate transformational change in gender relations. For example, introducing an explicit commitment to gender justice in the constitution of a producer organisation, or engaging in communications activities that increase the visibility of women’s work both on the farm and in the household.

- Enabling more women to become members of producer organizations in their own right by reviewing membership policy and/or encouraging men to share or gift ownership of land to their wives and other female family members.
- Establishing spaces to act as ‘incubators’ for women’s leadership and to allow both men and women to learn about gender and consider ideas about identity. Inclusion of women’s committees in the producer organisation governance structure also enables women leaders to have more influence over decision-making and access to financial resources, helping to place a greater emphasis on women’s priorities in organisational strategy.
- Creating opportunities for women to get involved in selling products – for example, as purchasing clerks or running small businesses – both to provide an additional source of income and to give women a greater understanding of market dynamics.
- Promoting access to affordable credit for women and/or campaigning for subsidised credit to be offered by the government or other local actors.
- Investing in adult literacy programmes to enable women to engage more effectively in democratic processes, such as leadership elections, and to increase their awareness of and ability to access rights over land ownership.
- Supporting ‘made by women’ initiatives, which add value to women’s produce, generating additional resources that can be used to finance further women’s empowerment initiatives and enable increased investment for women for their farms and families.

For more information, see: <http://www.twin.org.uk/assets/Twin-reports/Empowering-Women-Farmers-in-Agricultural-Value-Chains-1.pdf>

### **3. Women’s collective action fosters their participation in decision-making, Panama**

63. Indigenous women are confronted with a dual challenge as female individuals and as part of the Indigenous community, given that both groups experience systemic discrimination.

64. This case shows how women’s collective engagement and support can contribute to women’s access to policy decision-making spaces both through Indigenous local authorities and in the national context. Indigenous women in Panama are not only those traditionally in charge of reproductive and cultural roles in their communities, but are those also carrying the burden of the household chores and often of the struggles for the defence of their territories and the right to self-determination against large-scale infrastructure projects, such as dams or mines. Their skill to negotiate and advance the struggle on behalf of their entire community allowed them to be elected, for instance, as a cacique (high counsellor) within the Ngäbe Indigenous community council (a role normally reserved only for men). The same applies to the Guna women, who together created a cooperative of artisan craft makers in order to manage their main productive activity in the Guna territory in a community-minded manner. This approach means that men were also made to understand the importance of this endeavour. While in the urban context, Indigenous women must also face multiple challenges, this scenario also allows for the chance to strengthen their capacities by interacting and participating in other organisations that are non-Indigenous or mixed, enabling them in some cases to carry out advocacy work with national institutions.

For more information, see: <http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/SITUACION-INDIGENA-DORIS-BILL.pdf> (in Spanish)

## **B. Women's access to and control over land, natural resources, inputs and productive tools**

65. Women continue to experience discrimination in access to and control over land – including its tenure, use and transfer – due to legal barriers and social and cultural customs. Men are still prioritised in inheritance systems; male privilege is a feature of marriage; state programmes for the distribution of land favour men; and there is gender bias in the land market. Women-led farms are on

average smaller in size, and have worse conditions for producing and commercialising their goods: they control less land and livestock, have less access to credit or insurance, lower education levels, less access to extension services and market information. A similar situation arises inside family farms, where women are usually responsible for small areas in the backyard garden or on a part of the plot, and they have little influence over joint management. They often complement their activities with the collection of firewood, animal herding, and gathering of fruits and medicinal plants from the commons. The significant transfer of tenure rights to the private sector, along with armed conflicts, exert pressure on communal areas, traditional community spaces, and on peasant farmers, and they increase and recreate forms of exclusion of women.

66. In territories where water and socio-biodiversity abound, there is increased pressure on the more fertile and productive land. Large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the building of dams, affect populations that live along and are dependent on watercourses. The great majority of women working in fisheries are employed in a post-harvest capacity, thus they make a significant contribution to food security, livelihoods and household incomes. Despite their contribution, women fish processors and traders often remain marginalized in the sector, especially in the institutional decision-making processes that develop the policies that determine the conditions under which they work and engage in business. One of the reasons is that often women who process fish are not viewed as fishers, which is why their conditions are not taken into account in policies to strengthen or restore artisanal fisheries. Lack of access to credit, low levels of literacy, low bargaining power due partly to weak organization, and little access to and impeded management of fishery resources, are just some of the effects of marginalization of women in the sector.

67. Women need to have the right to equally access, control and use land and other natural resources, irrespective of their marriage status and particular tenure systems. Women should benefit from equal or priority treatment within the framework of agrarian reform and property, as well as resettlement plans. Women are particularly vulnerable when formalization occurs. Individual titling often leads to households' males becoming the sole legal owners of the land and places communal land in the hands of customary elites, so joint titling or community tenure should be considered as a strategy towards gender equality in land ownership as well. Rights to land, seeds and natural resources are a prerequisite for food sovereignty.

68. More knowledge on women's access to, use and management of territories is needed in order to tackle the manifold discriminations they experience. The World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020 (WCA 2020) recommends that censuses go beyond identifying the gender of the person in charge of the farm, property or plot (which still needs to be considered in many countries). The recommendations include, for example, questions to identify the distribution of decision-making inside the home regarding the management and property of assets. It is also pertinent that information is generated by women themselves.

69. Access to better conditions for women producers starts with the recognition that there is a variety of ways to produce food, and that women, especially those who are members of traditional communities, possess vast knowledge about practices that are adapted to their natural and changing environment, and to the culture that they wish to strengthen. Moreover, women are continually experimenting and therefore innovating. A recognition and exchange of knowledge is necessary, including knowledge that is systemized by teaching and research centres, aimed at increased production without adding to the work burden. The objective is to increase women's economic autonomy and communities' food sovereignty. It contributes to building resilience to climate change and addressing pollution caused by industrial agricultural models (i.e. pesticides, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), etc.). This collective process of building knowledge informs agroecological approaches and other innovations that support sustainable food systems that contribute to food security and nutrition. It is important to consider those practices and tools that allow for a breakaway from the gender-specific division of labour, in such a way as to open up new possibilities to women's creativity and other family and labour arrangements. When women are included in all stages of endogenous

development of new technologies and practices, they can take ownership of their work, become autonomous and constantly improve their abilities.

### Examples:

#### **1. Women's capacity building to tackle the negative effects of large-scale land acquisition – Katosi Women Development Trust (KWDT), Uganda<sup>62</sup>**

70. This case illustrates how an action-based research project on large-scale land acquisitions in the district of Mukono (where Lake Victoria is located, in central Uganda) was able to build the capacity of its community members, both to understand and to take progressive steps toward addressing land grabbing challenges in their community.

71. KWDT has conducted a study on the rampant land conflicts among the fishing communities of Mukono district, where KWDT operates. 73.4 percent of the Mukono district is covered by open water, especially in the area of Lake Victoria, making it very attractive for both local and foreign investors, and suitable for various kinds of investments such as tourism, large-scale fish farming and agriculture activities, among others. Large-scale land acquisition around the lake, for forms of investments other than traditional use such as agriculture and small-scale fishing, is increasing, leading to lawlessness, ignorance and forceful evictions from people living on local landing sites (a location nearby a body of water where fish are organised and traded). The selling and buying of vast pieces of land is increasingly leading isolating fishers to certain parts of the lake, which forces community members to occupy limited space on nearby landing sites.

72. Women – predominantly involved in processing and preserving fish after they are caught – are the most disadvantaged and affected by these ongoing displacements due to their limited opportunities to enter into alternative livelihoods. Local customs compound this – polygamy is common, where fishermen often have one wife at the landing site and another wife in their home town; as fishermen are forced to leave their jobs, their wives at landing sites are effectively left behind, making them even more vulnerable to financial insecurity and eviction.

73. The community members involved in the action-based project run by KWDT are both fishers and smallholders and family farmers, highlighting the strong interlinkages between water and land use. As a result of the project, a land pressure group was formed and is comprised of volunteers selected from each landing site, with an aim of making concerted efforts to resist exploitation and illegal displacements.

For more information, see: <http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Case-of-Katosi-Women-Development-Trust.compressed.pdf>

#### **2. Harnessing women pastoralists traditional knowledge, Chad<sup>63</sup>**

74. This case informs how female nomadic pastoralists were able to generate information through participatory cartography on traditional knowledge. The intention behind the project described in the case was to use the experience, materials and outputs to develop a pledge to the Nairobi Work Programme to provide African state parties with resources on how to integrate traditional oral knowledge into their national adaptation plans and platforms. 60 people (including people from the M'bororo community, and semi-nomadic and fully nomadic pastoralists from the territory concerned) took part in the mapping exercise (described via the link below), with a core trainee group of 16 men

<sup>62</sup>Submitted by the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF)

<sup>63</sup>Submitted by the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous People (WAMIP)

and 11 women. While there were fewer women than men attending, female facilitators of different ages were present, who were able to help the nomadic women take control of certain elements of the mapping and be fully involved.

75. The case shows how: a) evidence can be provided by pastoralists and meteorologists as to how different predictive knowledge systems on climate and natural resources can be used synergistically in national adaptation policy making; b) awareness of regionally influential climate policy bodies can be raised regarding the need and availability of participatory methods for integrating science and traditional knowledge in national adaptation policy processes and procedures; c) staff from African francophone conservation and meteorological agencies, NGOs and Indigenous activists can be trained in participatory 3D modelling (P3DM) in relation to pastoralist land use and adaptation, as an example of participatory methodology in integrating traditional knowledge into adaptation policy making in Africa.

For more information, see: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ChadReport\\_Nov2012.compressed.pdf](http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ChadReport_Nov2012.compressed.pdf)

### **3. Women and access to new technologies – enhancing women’s access to labour-saving technology in mastic tree oil extraction industry, Tunisia**

76. Women traditionally extract and process the oil from mastic trees (*Pistacia lentiscus*) in the forest areas in northwest Tunisia. The product is much appreciated for cooking and for its medicinal properties. It is an important source of income for the rural households even though the extraction and processing of the oil is arduous and time-consuming.

77. By introducing new technologies for the grinding, churning and pressing of the *Pistacia lentiscus* fruits, the project - implemented by FAO and the National Research Institute in Rural engineering, Water and Forestry - managed to significantly reduce Tunisian women’s work burden and increase their income from this product. Thanks to the introduction of electric grinders and hydraulic presses, the project made the extraction and processing of mastic tree oil far less time consuming: the same amount of fruit could be grounded in three hours instead of a whole day. In addition, the overall productivity increased by 40 percent. Therefore, the new technology while contributing significantly to a better yield and quality of oil, also increased women’s economic opportunities. This case highlights the importance of investing in labour-saving and productivity enhancing technologies to reduce women’s work burden and support their production and income generation and therefore strengthen their economic empowerment.

For more information, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jw1202vaKE> (in French)

### **C. Women's access to decent working conditions and adequate wages**

78. Women make up 43 percent of the agricultural workforce, employed in all agricultural sectors as day labourers, as seasonal workers, as migrant workers, on plantations and in pack houses, in glasshouses and cold stores. However, the percentage of the workforce that women constitute varies across countries, and employment roles are often gender-defined. For instance in the tea sector, which globally employs millions of workers, women are the largest part of the tea plucking workforce, who pick the tea leaf shoots from tea bushes. In the banana industry, women are mainly confined to pack houses, while women’s role in sugar cane harvesting varies enormously – in Africa, women do not generally cut the cane, whereas in the Caribbean they do. In the case of commercial crops like cut flowers, and export horticulture, women make up the majority of the workforce both in harvesting and packing.

79. The agricultural sector is regrettably characterized by significant deficits in suitable work for both women and men. Agricultural workers are often denied access to even basic rights covered in the ILO's core conventions, in particular to freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively. Agriculture is also one of the sectors in which safety and health conditions at work are the worst. It also has one of the higher rates of fatal accidents, and many millions of workers are injured or become ill through workplace accidents and exposure to pesticides.

80. Farmers, women and children are among the most vulnerable to pesticide risks. In developing nations, where livelihoods often rely on crops and harvests as often the only source of income, pests that attack crops are seen as a major threat that farmers may seek to eradicate using pesticides and insecticides. They often do this without proper education on the potential risks associated with exposure to such chemicals: long-term exposure to chemical pesticides and insecticides can lead to a number of health complications, such as Parkinson's disease, reproduction disorders, infertility, cancer and diabetes. The families of farm workers may be directly exposed to these agricultural chemicals – in Kyrgyzstan, for instance, a pilot survey revealed that up to 56 percent of women and more than 25 percent of children described using pesticides in their work – or indirectly exposed, for instance as women wash contaminated clothes and children play close to agricultural land.<sup>64</sup> Studies with evidence on women's exposure to risks is important as it can lead to a tightening of legislation on the packing and labelling of pesticide products. Some of the solutions to reduce exposure to pesticide can include developing national and regional initiatives to promote a more sustainable approach to food production and to increase the uptake of schemes including Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which emphasises sustainable management of pests and diseases.<sup>65</sup>

81. For women in agriculture, as in other sectors, there still remains a significant pay gap between men's and women's earnings. This affects women's access to income, especially when taking into account the low salaries that already characterise agricultural work. Sexual harassment is widespread in the sector, especially when women are on temporary contracts or paid via piece rates (wherein the employee is paid based on how many units are produced).

82. In terms of maternity rights, although the ILO conventions on maternity rights cover all workers, it is difficult in practice for women workers in agriculture to exercise these rights. Employers often keep women workers on short-term contracts, employing them on contracts of a few months at a time with a few day's break in between each contract. This practice specifically aims to avoid women gaining entitlement to maternity benefits. In some companies, women have to take pregnancy tests before they can be employed.

83. The ILO's supervisory bodies have highlighted problems related to working conditions, including the exclusion or non-coverage of women in the agricultural sector with respect to maternity leave, as well as the lack of statistical data regarding maternity leave coverage in this sector.

84. The gendered division of labour within the family and the huge burden of unpaid care work allocated to women prevent women from having enough time for education, productive work (especially productive farming), off-farm paid work, leadership participation, and leisure time. The reduction of unpaid care work contributes to women's ability to carry out more paid work and increase their agricultural productivity. Women who are able to send their children to childcare centres have their time effectively freed in order to participate in other activities such as farming, marketing of their products, and other economic, social and political activities. In some countries, state and public resource allocations for agriculture do not invest in childcare centres, viewing them as outside of the agricultural mandate and more of a private activity.

85. The way to address these deficits in decent work for rural women must start with governments ensuring that agricultural workers can truly exercise their right to belong to a trade union and to be

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<sup>64</sup><http://www.brsmeas.org/?tabid=5441>

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

represented by a trade union. Employers must also recognise that mature systems of industrial relations that care for all workers bring benefits and productivity.

### **Examples:**

#### **1. Promoting labour rights through collective bargaining, Indonesia/Pakistan**

86. Women's rights in the workplace should be guaranteed by the right to collective bargaining; breastfeeding is a right protected under maternity rights, thus maternity rights can be considered part of the right to food for children, and access to day care facilities is an enabling right in order to ensure the right to food<sup>66</sup>.

87. For instance, in tea plantations in the state of West Bengal in India, where women form more than 60 percent of the workforce, the International Union of Food and Agriculture Workers (IUF)-affiliated independent union Progressive Plantation Workers Union secured maternity rights through collective bargaining for all workers including mobile crèche facilities, which enabled workers to be in close proximity to their children to provide for their nutritional needs through breastfeeding.

88. Meanwhile, at Coca-Cola and Unilever factories in Pakistan, unions negotiated to have onsite day care facilities in a safe environment, including access to potable water. The unions there took the position that infant feeding is a part of the right to food. Also at a Coca-Cola plant in Pakistan, the union intervened to ensure gender-based hiring in permanent jobs in favour of women. Women previously had precarious roles with unstable incomes and weren't offered the same jobs as men. As a result, for the first time, women workers were given training and are now able to operate forklifts there. The union negotiated for the hiring of more women and for their placement in all positions without discrimination.

89. At a food processing plant of Unilever in Indonesia, a union collectively bargained for permanent work for more than 600 workers. This included 126 women who now, for the first time, had permanent work that gave them certainty in order to provide food for their families.

90. Exercising the right to collectively bargain wages also ensures that wages rise in real terms, thus wages keep pace with rising food prices.

For more information, see: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/IUF-CFS\\_role-of-women\\_case-studies.pdf](http://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/IUF-CFS_role-of-women_case-studies.pdf)

#### **2. The FTT- Thiaroye fish processing technique to reduce women's exposure to health risks and improve productivity**

91. Women in West Africa specialize in smoking bonga, catfish, sharks, skates and rays for immediate consumption in urban areas. Their operations are labour-intensive and characterized by small-scale marketing and low profit margins. Apart from people operating in community fisheries centres, smoking facilities and techniques are generally poor and do not receive assistance for improvement.

92. The high density of smoke emitted poses a health risk, and indeed many women do not encourage their daughters to take up fish smoking as a profession. Traditional smoking techniques often involve a massive burning of wood which leads to a variety of problems. For one, an exorbitant amount of CO<sub>2</sub> is produced, so the kilns produce more greenhouse gas pollution than they should. Also, traditional smoking releases contaminants known as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which are carcinogenic and hazardous to the human respiratory system. To overcome this problem, a new

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<sup>66</sup> CFS Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and nutrition, 2012 <http://www.fao.org/3/AV031e.pdf>

fish-smoking technology, the FTT-Thiaroye (or the FAO-Thiaroye fish processing technique) has been introduced in many African countries and some Asian countries. This technology is known for its efficient control of smoke and contaminants produced during the smoking process. The FTT-Thiaroye also reduces the amount of fuel needed, and provides five times more load capacity than traditional barrel ovens or even improved ovens like the Chorkor, Banda or Altona. In terms of food safety, the FTT-Thiaroye helps fish processors meet the highest international safety and quality standards, and therefore enables them to access broader and more remunerative markets. The FTT-Thiaroye ensures less heat, burn and smoke exposure. Smoking operations do not pose risk anymore to the health of women's eyes and of respiratory system".

For more information, see: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4174e.pdf> and <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/278337/icode/>

### **3. Participatory policy design to recognize, redistribute and reduce women's unpaid care work, Rwanda<sup>67</sup>**

93. Evidence on unpaid care work collected by women farmers in two districts of Rwanda, Nyanza and Gisagara – through diaries and a baseline survey<sup>68</sup> – was shared with Rwanda's Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion in order to revise their Family Policy in 2013. A multi-faceted approach was used for the review process, including community sensitization and direct community engagement with ministries, national leaders and parliamentarians, to advocate for increased recognition and improved redistribution of women's burden of unpaid care work as well as more support for their farming activities.

94. As a result of ongoing advocacy, and the success of child care centres aiding in making more time available to women, increasing their productive capacity and reducing violence between men and women, the Ministry pledged to include similar low-cost interventions in the new Family Policy and committed to implement another similar approach, called home-based childcare centres. The Executive Secretary of Rwanda's Southern Province called for local leaders to include plans in their annual performance contracts that reduce women's unpaid care work. Local government also availed rooms at public schools to serve as child care centres, and the government availed land plots – free of charge – for women farmers' groups in the Nyanza and Gisagara districts. An Early Childhood Development Policy was developed and approved by the government, pledging the implementation of community child care centres in the near future.

For more information, see: <http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/full20report20final20public20281129.pdf>

## **D. Women's capacities to access markets**

95. Although the contributions women make to global food security and improved nutrition outcomes are essential as food growers, sellers and nutrition providers to their families, in many contexts they are constrained by the inability to leverage their full potential due to lack of access to capacity-strengthening services. These services include financial, social protection and extension services. Developing and implementing innovative and effective approaches to increasing the coverage of both soft and hard infrastructure and service provision networks to equip women with the skills and resources they need is therefore a key component in furthering women's empowerment for food security and nutrition (see Example 1 below on Enhancing Women's Entrepreneurship Capacities, India). In order to identify the most effective ways of achieving women's access to

<sup>67</sup> Submitted by ActionAid Rwanda, Rwanda

<sup>68</sup> ActionAid methodology on unpaid care work: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making\\_care\\_visible.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/making_care_visible.pdf)

financial, social protection and extension services, it is necessary to strengthen gender-informed data collection to inform new market-based and gender-responsive approaches to value chain development. This includes collecting data that enhances the visibility of women's overlooked labour contributions, as well as recognising the socio-economic value of reproductive work, and of production for donation, exchange, or self-consumption.

96. One of the most salient challenges faced by women farmers is the lack of access to extension services, training, education, and other learning opportunities, particularly on topics related to commerce, marketing, accounting, business administration and agronomy. The lack of access to extension services is due to several factors, which can include religious and sociocultural pressures related to gender norms, exclusion from rural organizations (which often act as vectors of training opportunities), and gender-blind extension programmes that fail to take into account the particular needs of women with regards to their agricultural activities; these tend to be focused on specific and distinct crops and technologies. There is clear evidence that allowing women to access training regimens informed by their specific needs leads to improved earning opportunities and economic empowerment (see the below examples of Enhancing Women's Entrepreneurship Capacities, India and Integrated dairy schemes in Afghanistan).

97. Another challenge concerns access to financial services. These services are necessary in order to improve women's capacities to produce food in the most effective and appropriate manner, to market their production and to broaden the economic opportunities available to them (see Example 3: Enhancing Women's Access to Institutional Finance, Bangladesh). Obstacles to accessing financial services include: barriers to ownership of assets that may be used as collateral due to biased legal frameworks, lower levels of literacy, and a lack of financial products specifically tailored to the activities and needs of women. One successful approach has been to develop innovative financial schemes that are able to provide contextually-appropriate and gender-sensitive solutions to empower women to make use of the most suitable production techniques and inputs for a given environment.

98. The third challenge to building capacities in the context of women's empowerment is access to social protection services, such as: transfers of cash and food, insurance schemes, public works programmes, and input and food price subsidies. Social protection programmes have enormous potential to promote the economic empowerment of women and reduce gender inequalities, but only when they adopt a gender-sensitive approach during both the design and implementation phases (see Example 4: Women's Empowerment through Social Protection, Rwanda). These three broad elements of capacity-strengthening are all key to improving women's fair access to markets. This topic has also already been substantially covered by the CFS recommendations on connecting smallholders to markets, endorsed at the CFS 42 conference in 2015.

### **Examples:**

#### **1. Enhancing Women's Entrepreneurship Capacities, India**

99. An Indian NGO, Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), has established Rural Urban Development Initiative (RUDI) processing centres to help women in India secure employment opportunities, empowering them to be self-reliant alongside supportive services.

100. The centres process agricultural produce with cleaning, packaging, branding and coding services. With this initiative, farmers can generate additional income of approximately 20 percent more than the market price for raw, pre-processed products.

101. Under the programme, SEWA members provide training to empower the centres' workforce with necessary skill sets as per the needs and demands of the market. As more women are trained to run the centres, they become entrepreneurs and retail in neighbouring areas, thereby sustaining the business activities of the centres. SEWA members are treated as entrepreneurs and participate as shareholders in the trust. Each centre has about 100 SEWA members working there permanently.

102. The initiative ensures a fair return to these small-scale farmers, generates employment opportunities and ensures food security to the rural women and their households. By providing the necessary infrastructure for value-added activities, as well as training and extension services, the initiative helps women in India realize their economic potential as entrepreneurs. By empowering women with financial skills and life skills, they are able to earn a livelihood, and help better the lives of their family and the community they live in.

103. In addition, many of these centres are the products of cross-sectoral partnerships. For example, the centre established near Vadodara in Gujarat was set up through a partnership with Mastercard allowing approximately 2000 farmers and 400 SEWA members to sell their agricultural produce to the processing centre and collect money for their goods immediately.

For more information, see:

- <http://newsroom.mastercard.com/press-releases/mastercard-and-sewa-enable-womens-empowerment-in-india/>
- [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---emp\\_policy/documents/publication/wcms\\_234890.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_policy/documents/publication/wcms_234890.pdf)
- <http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3488e/i3488e.pdf>

## 2. Integrated dairy schemes in Afghanistan

104. Developed by FAO, the integrated dairy schemes (IDS) model consists of a dairy value chain – managed by the relevant union as an enterprise – that encompasses milk production, collection, processing and marketing of pasteurized milk and dairy products, while providing training for women dairy farmers. In Afghanistan, women participate in the dairy value chain almost exclusively at the first stage, as milk producers, while men play different roles along all parts of the value chain. Thanks to IDS training and extension services, farmers have been able to improve their cattle breeds and feeding, and increase the number of dairy cows they own, which substantially raises their incomes.

105. Cattle owners participating in IDS produce between 5 and 20 litres of milk per day, compared with the average 3.2 litres produced by small-scale dairy farmers in Afghanistan. A woman who sells 15 litres of milk per day at the Balkh Livestock Development Union (BLDU), for example, can generate a monthly income of US\$140, a significant income in rural Afghanistan. An additional benefit to women is that better-fed cattle produce more dung, which is used as fertilizer on crops and, most importantly, as a replacement for firewood, thus reducing the pressure on wood consumption and the associated workload and risks for women.

106. Training under IDS is crucial to women's empowerment, since – in addition to improved cattle management – they learn valuable skills that enable them to better take care of themselves and their families. Consequently, their bargaining power in the household and the community has improved, as has their ability to spend money on what they consider priority needs, such as more education for girls and boys, improved nutrition, and access to health services for the family. Thanks to training, women also improved their social standing and their freedom of movement; some of them participated in exchange visits organized by IDS to other cooperatives, thus broadening their horizons. Furthermore, some women have participated in the public sphere and some are even involved in politics at the village and district levels. This may have a strong long-term impact, leading in time to rural communities with more balanced gender roles and gender dynamics.

For more information, see: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4585e.pdf>

### **3. Enhancing Women's Access to Institutional Finance, Bangladesh**

107. The Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Development Project supported the development and expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Bangladesh from 2009 to 2013. In specific pilot districts, the number of women-owned SMEs increased by over 10 percent. The training of women SME owners in business development, accounting, loan application rules and processes, and in the regulations governing businesses, facilitated their improved access to institutional finance. The formation of advocacy groups and membership in different associations enhanced the confidence of women SME owners and their ability to lobby for policy changes. Dialogue and relationship building between participating financial institutions and women's SME associations helped foster mutual understanding and cooperation, leading to better outcomes for women-owned SMEs. Participating financial institution policies and products require further adaptation to meet the needs and circumstances of women owned SMEs.

108. Overall, factors that contributed to the project's gender equality results were: (i) the inclusion of a technical assistance (TA) element that specifically focused on women entrepreneurs; (ii) single-source selection of the Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI) as the implementing agency for the TA; (iii) proactive role of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in managing the project; and (iv) rapport established between the Ministry of Finance, the Bangladesh Bank, ADB, and the BWCCI. The project also led to unexpected positive results, especially in the area of policy changes favouring women-owned SMEs. The project epitomizes a successful public-private partnership in TA through the joint and complementary working relationship between the Ministry of Finance, the Bangladesh Bank, and the BWCCI.

For more information, see: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/160745/gender-equality-ban-sme.pdf>

### **4. Women's Empowerment through Social Protection, Rwanda**

109. The Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) is a large-scale social protection programme owned and led by the Rwandan government, consisting of four components: public works, direct support, financial services and sensitization. The design of the programme also envisages "gender parity" in the selection of VUP public works participants, where at least 50 percent should be females.

110. The study found that participation in VUP public works positively enables female beneficiaries to access wage labour and earn cash. For many women, the wages serve as a catalyst for small investments in economic activities, particularly in petty trading, brewing and selling local beer, or renting a small plot of land to expand household agricultural production. This is due to their newly acquired ability to earn additional cash and control it, and to their increased access to credit sources.

111. Women's VUP participation was widely considered as setting a good example for other women in the village, demonstrating their economic potential, ability to earn income for the household and capabilities beyond traditional domestic and agricultural roles. The provision of temporary employment to women through the VUP can therefore be seen as contributing to positively changing perceptions of women's economic roles.

For more information, see: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5430e.pdf>

#### IV. LEARNING AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

112. Through a compendium of international instruments, countries have committed to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, both as stand-alone goals and as prerequisites for sustainable development. The targets, conventions and guidelines exist and have been ratified by UN Member States, binding them to assume their responsibility to act, including by removing any domestic policies or laws that are inconsistent with the achievement of the agreed objectives. What is needed now is for decision-makers to have strong political will to stand behind what has been committed to and to translate the global commitments into policies and programmes and investment at the national level.

113. For women to be empowered, they must be well-nourished have the ability to make informed decisions, supported by access to information, and have possession of knowledge and skills. Women's groups and associations can assist in awareness raising and training to help women meaningfully engage in the policy and planning process at all levels. This will help to ensure that gender equitable outcomes are achieved in policy and practice.

114. Women must also have access to and control over productive and financial resources. In cases where this exists, there has been an increase in agricultural output. This also works to enable the full realization of human rights, has a positive impact on women's health and nutrition, and on that of their families. Importantly, unlocking the full potential is only possible when they are supported by their communities. More gender disaggregated data and research are essential to shed light on gender disparities. Schemes to promote investments benefiting rural women are sometimes well established at the grassroots level but policy approaches to incorporate them at a larger scale are required.

115. Yet, as has been outlined in this paper, women encounter a range of obstacles when it comes to being economically empowered. Some of the barriers cited include discriminatory sociocultural norms and practices, and structural inequalities, that limit education and training; hindered mobility and presence in the public sphere; being assigned the primary responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work; the denial of the right to inherit and/or own property; subjection of women and girls to multiple forms of violence; restriction of their engagement in value chains and limited access to markets; a failure to provide essential services; and prescribed employment and income-generating opportunities.

116. As demonstrated through the above-mentioned case studies, however, actions can be taken to help overcome these obstacles. Key elements for creating enabling environments for gender equality include: (a) comprehensive, cross-sectoral and coordinated normative frameworks; (b) accountability mechanisms that apply to all actors; (c) effective national institutional settings that target women; (d) gender-responsive planning and budgeting; (e) programmes and services that directly address the particular situations, needs and priorities of rural women, encompassing their diverse situations; (f) access to decent work; (g) the equal right and ability to command resources; (h) the elimination of violence against women and girls; (i) sensitization, for all stakeholders, as to gender equality and rights, inclusive of sexual and reproductive health and rights; (j) capacity strengthening, encompassing formal education, tailored training and extension services; (k) access to all economic resources and social services; and (l) the promotion of women's leadership and equal participation in decision-making at all levels. While this paper does not exhaustively address all issues pertaining to the empowerment of rural women, and of their role in agriculture and the agrifood sector, the information suggests various issues for discussion.

117. The 2017 Independent Evaluation of CFS notes that: "The committee has integrated gender equality and the empowerment of women to a great extent. It has produced policy recommendations on gender, but the extent to which these have been taken up by countries and regions is unknown."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Evaluation of the Committee on World Food Security. page viii.  
[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1617/Evaluation/CFS\\_Evaluation\\_Draft\\_Report\\_version5\\_31Jan2017-clean.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1617/Evaluation/CFS_Evaluation_Draft_Report_version5_31Jan2017-clean.pdf)

Therefore, Forum participants may wish to contemplate the following questions, which may also be considered within the context of the discussions on the CFS Plan of Action in response to the CFS independent evaluation:

- i) How are CFS policy outcomes promoting women's empowerment, women's rights and gender equality as a pre-requisite for food security and nutrition?
- ii) Taking into account its mandate, what concrete steps can CFS take to further advance women's empowerment, women's rights and gender equality in its work to produce a tangible shift towards gender equality and enhance the implementation of the UN General Recommendation 34 of CEDAW (2016) on the rights of rural women?
- iii) What actions are required and by whom in order to strengthen the content and implementation of national and international normative frameworks for women's empowerment?