




Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

Promoting the dissemination and uptake of the


# Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition

## The challenge

Gender-based discrimination, or the denial of women's human rights, is one of the major causes of poverty and food insecurity. As evidenced by [The status of women in agrifood systems](#) and [The unjust climate](#) reports, women and girls remain disproportionately affected by global crises and shocks and the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. Due to structural barriers and discriminatory social norms, women are often unable to access resources and services, make fully independent decisions, or participate in decision-making fora within their communities and beyond.

 Women earn 82 cents for every dollar earned by men in agriculture, and the gender gap in land productivity between female- and male-managed farms of the same size is 24 percent (FAO 2023).

Despite notable progress in advancing the rights of women and girls over the past decade, systemic inequalities and persistent challenges continue to hinder meaningful change - many of which have become more acute in recent years. Significant reductions in funding for women-led organizations are particularly concerning. These setbacks underscore the urgent need to develop and implement more effective, sustainable solutions to advance gender equality and address the interconnected issues of poverty and hunger.

 Insight from the guidelines: Recommendations 44 (IV) and 45 (I) from the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition (VG-GEWGE) explicitly call for the support to women's rights organizations through direct funding and recognition at public fora. [Learn more](#)

## The opportunity

On the other hand, closing gender gaps can significantly contribute to economic development and achieving zero hunger. Improving gender equality by empowering women and girls can contribute substantially to countries' economic growth and social justice. Expanding opportunities for women and girls is also central to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 and 5 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a whole, leaving no one behind.



This is why the VG-GEWGE are a unique opportunity to be seized. The guidelines are the first inter-governmental and multistakeholder negotiated policy instrument aligning the objectives and agendas of food security and nutrition with gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.



Closing the gender gap in farm productivity and the wage gap in agrifood-system employment would increase global gross domestic product by 1 percent (or nearly USD 1 trillion). This would reduce global food insecurity by about 2 percentage points, reducing the number of food-insecure people by 45 million (FAO 2023).

## The way forward

Negotiated by 130+ countries, the VG-GEWGE represent a landmark achievement in which Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Members commit to tackle gender inequalities for enhanced food security and nutrition. They provide an important normative umbrella and entry point for the development of policies and programmes at country level addressing the root causes of gender-based discrimination, including rigid social norms.

Their endorsement has created momentum for renewing the collective commitments of stakeholders to foster greater policy coherence within the agricultural sector. An analysis of agricultural policy documents conducted by FAO showed that only 19 percent of policy documents relating to agriculture and rural development from 68 low- and middle-income countries included policy goals related to gender (FAO 2023). The VG-GEWGE have the potential to revert this figure.



Insight from the guidelines: Section 3.3 of the VG-GEWGE highlights the need to ensure that women have their voices heard in the development of policies and in decision-making fora. [Learn more](#)

The VG-GEWGE pave the way to ensure the progressive realization of the equal right to nutritious food for all, contributing to advancing just, inclusive and resilient agrifood systems. They are based on a series of principles which strengthen their foundation as an instrument for the benefit of all, including the commitment to non-discrimination, country ownership and the human right to food.

## FAO's commitment

FAO actively participated in the development, consultation and negotiation process of the VG-GEWGE. The implementation of the guidelines is voluntary by definition and depends on political will and targeted investment of time and human resources. Through the Commit to Grow Equality initiative, FAO has stated its support to the uptake and dissemination of the VG-GEWGE.

A testament to its engagement, in January 2025, FAO launched a multi-year programme to promote the uptake of the VG-GEWGE with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Additional programme activities are funded by Global Affairs Canada, the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and the Government of France.



# Translating FAO's commitment into action

## The programme

The programme, launched in 2025, aims to translate the VG-GEWGE into practice by supporting stakeholders to take ownership of the VG-GEWGE and integrate its recommendations in coordinated and multi-sectoral national policies, laws, programmes and investment plans.

Programme activities are designed and implemented under two main **objectives**:



Raise **awareness** about the importance of the VG-GEWGE as a policy instrument and enhance understanding of its content



Strengthen **capacities** of stakeholders to implement the recommendations contained in the VG-GEWGE

Each stakeholder group and core programme countries require tailored initiatives based on their priorities, constituencies, and modus operandi. With this in mind, the programme developed an action plan that addresses country-specific needs and gaps.

Strategically, the programme acts through global, regional, national and local levels.



### Global

Produce accessible tools and public resources to facilitate stakeholders' understanding of the content and of the importance of the VG-GEWGE which allow for the guidelines to be promoted beyond the programme walls.



### Regional

Promote knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer learning and strengthen sub-regional networks through multistakeholder awareness-raising activities.



### National

Address countries' priorities through tailor-made initiatives guided by national experts and raise local voices which may often be forgotten at higher-level fora.



### Local

Recognize the multiple contexts within countries and engage rural communities through participatory approaches.

Key to the programme's success is its **collaborative** and **sustainable** nature.

#### Collaboration

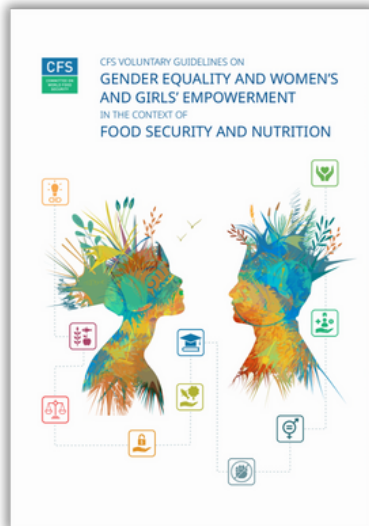
The programme mirrors the CFS approach and seeks to build on existing initiatives to maximize impact – these include the CFS mechanisms, the UN Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment, and FAO's country-level portfolios. The programme builds from the ground up, responds to partners' needs and accelerates ongoing progress by learning from those who are already deep in implementation efforts.

#### Sustainability

To ensure sustainability, FAO promotes ownership of the guidelines as well as of programme results among participants. By building a strong foundation through the documentation of good practices, by mobilizing resources for expansion in the future, and by investing in local skills and knowledge, the programme will allow for greater sustainability and long-term impact.

# Learn more & stay in touch

## Full guidelines



## Overview



## The programme online



# The nine focus areas

Women's and girls' food security and nutrition



Leadership and participation



Economic and social empowerment



Access to and control over resources



Education and capacity building



Social protection and assistance



Recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work



Eliminating violence and discrimination



Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment across food security and nutrition in conflicts, humanitarian crises, and emergencies



### References

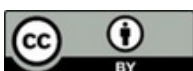
CFS. 2024. *CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition*. FAO, Rome.

FAO. 2023. *The status of women in agrifood systems*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc5343en>

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