

TOWARDS A GENDER-RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO FOOD & NUTRITION SECURITY



in the Sahel and West Africa

28 September - 9 October 2020

ONLINE DISCUSSION

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BACKGROUND

The OECD Development Centre and the Sahel and West Africa Club are collaborating with the Agence française de développement (AFD), the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the G5 Sahel to host an interactive discussion on the [Wikigender](#) platform on the topic “Towards a Gender-Responsive Approach to Food and Nutrition Security in the Sahel and West Africa”.

Women play a pivotal role in a wide range of activities supporting food and nutrition security. They are the powerhouses of the Sahel and West African food economy. Two-thirds of all employed women work across the food system, accounting for half of the labour force. They dominate off-farm segments of food value chains including food processing and selling as well as food-away-from-home. They are also important actors in cross-border trade. Nevertheless, access to affordable and nutritious foods is beyond the reach of many women and girls. Low income and education levels, discriminatory laws, social norms, and practices such as those revealed in the [Social Institutions and Gender Index \(SIGI\)](#), drive food insecurity among women by curbing their ownership over assets such as land, water and energy as well as their access to financial services, social capital, information and technology, agricultural inputs and services. The double burden facing women balancing the demands of agricultural production and unpaid care and domestic work compound these inequalities.

In the Sahel and West Africa, more than 40% of women of reproductive age suffer from anaemia across 14 countries, driving maternal and child morbidity, and undermining women’s economic empowerment. Obesity, which was practically unheard of in the region in the past, affects more women than men. Stunting, a measure of chronic malnutrition, often has its origins in utero due to, for example, poor maternal nutrition. Similarly, women who are overweight or obese are at a greater risk of giving birth to heavier babies, putting them at a higher risk of being overweight and obese as adults.

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action recognised gender-mainstreaming as an indispensable strategy for achieving gender equality, including in the area of food security. Twenty-five years later, many responses still tend to operate in silos and focus narrowly on improving women’s agency or access to information for example, instead of addressing the social, structural, and institutional barriers that hamper food and nutrition security among women and girls. Policies also often fail to include men and boys, yet understanding the drivers behind their motivations and behaviours is key to addressing unspoken societal barriers to gender equality. The major challenge lies in developing inclusive policy responses that address these barriers. This could help pave the way towards a more sustainable and transformative change within the West African food system and fuel progress towards achieving not only the “zero hunger” goal (SDG 2) but also “gender equality” (SDG 5) and the other SDGs.

OBJECTIVE

The objective is to contribute to a process of mutual learning and dialogue that can inspire more gender-responsive and sustainable solutions to food and nutrition insecurity. Drawing on your experience and expertise, we would like to identify some concrete and promising examples of gender-responsive food and nutrition security programming, and explore and discuss the key lessons learned. The outcomes of the discussion will be published in a report.

KEY QUESTIONS

- 1. What is at risk when food and nutrition security programming fails to take gender into account?**
 - ▶ What does “gender-mainstreaming” in food and nutrition security policies and programmes mean in practice?
 - ▶ How can the availability of sex-disaggregated food and nutrition security data be improved?
 - ▶ How can early-warning systems be more gender-responsive?
- 2. What are some of the key lessons learned from best practices around gender-responsive programming in the area of food and nutrition security? What are the success factors and how can they be scaled-up?**
 - ▶ Can cash transfers alleviate food insecurity and strengthen gender equality? What specific measures need to be taken to ensure that cash transfers achieve gender-equitable outcomes?
 - ▶ Emerging research shows that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to exacerbate the gendered nature of food and nutrition insecurity globally. What actions can be taken to prevent the most serious damage to the economic empowerment of women in general and particularly rural women?
- 3. What can be done to bring attention to gender-responsive food and nutrition security programming among the region’s decision-making bodies?**
 - ▶ Are there lessons to be learned from other regions?
 - ▶ How can women be empowered to exercise their rights and take active participation in decision-making bodies?

GET INVOLVED

www.wikigender.org

Join our discussion...

by responding to the guiding questions above from **28 September to 9 October 2020**.

Log in with Twitter, Facebook or Google and post a comment on the [Wikigender](#) platform in French, English or Spanish.

Invite your colleagues...

networks and contacts who might be interested in participating!

Post about...

the discussion on social media using the hashtags:

#FaimZéroPourElles and #CommunicatingGender

Tag us with: @Wikigender, @SWAC_OECD and @OECD_Centre.

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