



High Level Gender Inequality and Food Systems in Africa Dialogue

Concept Note.

Date: 13th July 2022

Time: 2:00 PM Lusaka Zambia

Venue: Radisson Blu, Lusaka, Zambia

Hybrid Meeting

[Physical attendees' registration form](#)

Zoom Registration: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_LxN3ILZOTsCJOpr-ITrhiw

Introduction

African Union (AU) has designated 2022 as the Year of Nutrition and Food Security. This comes at a time when drought has been unfolding for more than two years in the Horn of Africa. According to the *Dangerous Delay 2: The cost of inaction*¹ report by Oxfam and Save the children, drought in the Horn of Africa has been a common and costly feature over the past 10 years and worsening climatic conditions are considered by many to be the new reality. The ongoing Russia invasion in Ukraine is also significant to Africa's nutrition and food security. According to United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Food Price Index, food prices reached a new all-time high in February 2022 because of disruptions in the food supply chain caused by the COVID 19 pandemic and the conflict has added to that.

There is a well-established body of knowledge and evidence that women play a vital role in the global food production and food systems, representing almost half of the total agricultural workforce in low-income countries. However, persistent gender inequalities within food systems are equally and widely documented. Women have lesser access to capital and food production assets such as land and are less connected to food value chains either for staple or cash crops especially during unprecedented crisis such as drought and conflict.

¹ <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621373/bp-dangerous-delay-2-180522-en.pdf>

The COVID 19 Pandemic containment measures posed challenges to rural women with regard to their roles in maintaining household food security, as agricultural producers, farm managers, processors, traders, wage workers and entrepreneurs. This has been demonstrated through the findings of the Gendered Impact of Covid 19 on Livelihoods in Africa study done through a collaboration between Oxfam and African Economic Research Consortium (AERC). Even before the pandemic, rural women have disproportionately been affected by health and economic crises in several ways, including but not limited to food security and nutrition, time poverty, access to health facilities, services and economic opportunities, and gender-based violence. The pandemic exacerbated these inequalities.

The 3rd Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development (CAADP) Programme Biennial Review Report of the African Union Commission on the Implementation of the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods² stated that out of 51 member that reported in 2021, only ten had made progress on the commitment to empower rural women in agriculture. Women's participation in agriculture is limited by various obstacles such as access to land, finance, and markets. Member States therefore committed to increasing the proportion of rural women that are empowered in agriculture to 20% by 2025. This included in decision making, access to productive resources, control of use of income, leadership in the community, and time allocation for leisure. Recognising and acknowledging the constraints placed on food systems can however assist us to go back to the drawing board and incorporating some of the indigenous knowledge systems that can be useful in addressing some of the challenges.

Our Convening

In line with the African Union theme on *“Strengthening resilience in nutrition and food security on the African continent: Strengthening agro-food systems, health and social protection systems for the acceleration of human, social and economic capital development”* Oxfam International in Partnership with African Economic Research Consortium AERC and AU ECOSOCC will convene a high-level dialogue on Gender Inequality and food systems. This Dialogue is informed by the outcomes of Gendered Impact of Covid 19 on Livelihoods in Africa study and seeks to highlight and unpack the following.

² https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/41573-doc-ENGLISH_3rd_CAADP_Biennial_Review_Report_final.pdf

- **Gender and resilient food systems:** Oxfam and partners acknowledge Women are vulnerable on all dimensions of food systems including availability, access, and utilization. Unwritten rules informed by discriminatory social and gender norms affect policy formulation, decision making process and food systems governance. They also impact household nutrition around who should eat and what they should eat and when, leading to nutritional deficiencies among women, especially during reproductive years, which consequently leads to negative nutrition impact for society. Resilient food systems cannot be built or thrive in the current power relations. To change this there must be social and political will to challenge this system to create reliable, equitable and resilient food systems. Gender inequality has been further entrenched by climate, weather shocks and the COVID-19 pandemic as women have limited access to social protection which consequently affects their ability to respond to food insecurity. One cannot speak about food systems without talking about the intricacies that characterise the issue of access to land which are directly linked to food systems. The domination of our food systems by 'big agriculture' has undermined its ability to provide livelihoods and has accelerated and deepened the processes that are driving poor people especially women off the land.
- **Nexus of food security and GBV:** Food insecurity during emergencies is an issue that affects entire communities but affects women and girls in specific ways. Women tend to have limited control over and access to resources and finances during an emergency which puts them at risk of coercion and sexual exploitation for food rations. In the face of climate change and environmental disasters women in affected communities have travel far for collection of firewood, water, food / non-food items for cooking, shelter which also put them at risk of sexual assault. Families also resort to child marriage as a coping mechanism to lessening food needs within the family or leverage their daughters in exchange for food.

Objectives

- Take stock of the progress made in the implementation of the AU commitments on gender and nutrition at the continental, regional and national level and make recommendations to further gender equality and human rights in the continent.
- Evaluate short-medium and long-term macroeconomic consequences of the pandemic on African economies, including the impact on food insecurity, malnutrition, and hunger.

- Examine gendered socio-economic impacts of the pandemic to inform, inspire and influence gender transformative policy responses that can benefit larger swathes of the population.
- Discuss gender-responsive strategies, policies, and programmes for advancing sustainable food production and consumption, fostering regenerative food and agricultural systems.
- Consider sexual and gender-based violence and linkages to Food systems in the context of climate, environmental and disaster risks, humanitarian settings and propose targeted responses in policies and programmes.

Proposed Approach

The format of the dialogue will include expert, political and technical panel discussions, practical recommendations; and networking opportunities for stakeholders working in the fields of Gender Justice and Food Security.

Profile of Participants

Participants will include representatives from AU Member States, the AUC, RECs, Regional and Grassroots Women's Right Organisations (WROs) Feminist activist and thought leaders, think tanks and academics.

Forum Language

The discussion will take place in English with simultaneous interpretation in French.

Venue & Date

The forum will take place in Lusaka Zambia on **13 July 2022 2pm** at Luangwa Hall, Mulungushi Conference Center. For Physical and virtual registration use the links above.

For more information contact.

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