1. Introduction

The purpose of the roundtable meeting was to provide an opportunity for members of the Platform attending CSW62 to get together to share experiences and identify potential future areas for joint work which specifically looks into the issues faced by rural women and girls in the context of agriculture and rural development. Representatives from the three Rome-based agencies (FAO, IFAD and WFP), UN Habitat, bi-lateral donors (Global affairs Canada, MFA Finland and BMZ Germany) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation attended the event (see Annex 1 for participants list). The Platform wishes to thank Clare Bishop for moderating the meeting and FAO for their support in providing the meeting room and logistic arrangements.

2. Presentations

Five short presentations were offered as a basis for the roundtable discussion:

- **Global Affairs Canada**: Amrane Boumghar spoke of Canada’s new Feminist International Assistance Policy that places initiatives to promote gender equality and empower women and girls at the centre of their work to reduce extreme poverty and build a more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world. Women are to become partners in development, with the opportunities to express their needs, organise and influence the allocation of resources (ppt available).

- **IFAD**: Khadidja Doucoure noted IFAD’s three pillars of engagement – inclusiveness, profitability and sustainability. With the majority of the portfolio focusing on market-oriented initiatives, one opportunity is to increase young women’s access to markets, their participation in and leadership of farmer organisations, and their engagement with post-farm activities. She stated that this work needs to have ‘a positive impact on women’s daily lives, not just for show-casing in speeches’. Steven Jonckheere spoke of the ambitious targets IFAD has set itself for gender transformative approaches, and noted the challenges of scaling up and the gender data gap at the outcome level.

- **FAO**: Susan Kaaria described FAO’s partnerships at various levels: from participating in, informing and influencing global policy dialogue (examples: CEDAW article on rural women and VGGT); to ensuring that gender is mainstreamed into regional agricultural strategies; and, at country level, participating in multi-stakeholder discussions and country platforms (ppt available).

- **MFA Finland**: Sanna-Liisa Taivalmaa highlighted the key differences in operating modalities between IFIs and bilateral donors – in terms of relationship with the national government,
size and duration of the investment, management arrangements and provision of technical assistance (ppt available).

- **Global Donor Platform**: Clare Bishop presented the findings of a study recently conducted for the Platform which reviewed *women’s empowerment in agribusiness investments*. Specific attention was paid to eight domains of gender inequality, the four-point gender rating, and the role of project management in contributing to gender-responsive outcomes and impacts (ppt available).

3. **Discussion**

The following themes emerged during the discussion:

(I) **Messages to donors: good practices to strengthen project design and implementation**

- **Placing gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) at the core of development activities**
  
  Canada noted there is still a tendency by many to develop a gender strategy as an adjunct to the main programme whereas it needs to be at the centre. There needs to be a determined shift to move GEWE centre-stage. **Recommendation**: Encourage donors to place GEWE at the centre of programme design and implementation for economic gains, inclusivity and sustainability.

- **The proliferation of guidelines, checklists etc.**
  
  Concern was expressed that many wheels are being reinvented as each agency sets out to develop its own materials. The challenge is how to bring all the commitments and checklists into practice. **Recommendation**: Ensure checklists etc are accompanied by capacity building in their use and broader awareness raising of the relevance of GEWE to development outcomes.

- **Gender data gaps: The persistent lack of sex-disaggregated data hinders analysis and lesson learning.** **Recommendation**: As a good practice, donors should insist on the collection of SDD in their reporting mechanisms. In addition, in very large grants, donors should ensure there is gender expertise in the implementing agency.

(II) **Potential areas for Platform follow-up**

- **Indicators of gender-transformative outcomes and impacts**
  
  With the growth of interest in addressing the underlying causes of gender inequalities, many agencies are paying more attention to the qualitative impacts of GEWE initiatives, beyond simply counting women as participants or beneficiaries. The UN Statistics Division has developed a [minimum set of gender indicators](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/indicators/) (52 quantitative and 11 qualitative) addressing economic structures, education, health, public health and human rights; only a few would appear to be immediately relevant to the agricultural and rural sectors. FAO and IFAD are participating in the BMGF-funded initiative developing the Pro-WEAI for use at project level, but it is recognised that this is still a resource intensive process.
WFP is piloting the ‘gender equality for food security’ (GE4FS) measure which has 24 questions covering five dimensions of gender equality (building on DHS questionnaires). In a recent study to explore the potential of the WFP’s Food Assistance for Assets programme to empower women, seven dimensions of women’s empowerment were identified (organisation, recognition, intra-household dynamics, workload, skills, livelihood income and understanding of rights).

**Recommendation:** Explore whether development agencies working on agriculture and rural development could collect a set of minimum indicators, preferably linked to the SDG indicators (and in the process possibly moving some from Tier 3 to Tier 2). There needs to be a binding obligation to collect these data.

**Going to scale**

Many recognise the challenge in moving from small-scale pilot transformative activities to achieving impact at scale. Canada and IFAD recognised that responsibility for going to scale lies with national governments; donors are simply facilitators. BMGF is conducting cost-benefit analysis to evaluate different interventions in order to get evidence of what works. They have found that many interventions have a good impact on women’s empowerment (eg leadership, mobility, confidence) yet they do not get them out of poverty. BMGF has just launched ‘Equality is greater’ programme; they are embedding country labs in Ethiopia and Nigeria; and recognise the work of think-tank J-PAL on poverty graduation pathways.

**Recommendations:**

(i) Support capacity building in national governments;
(ii) Take voices of rural women to government through enabling their participation in policy dialogue;
(iii) Mainstream gender-related activities throughout the project budget (no more pilots);
(iv) Put responsibility for delivering on gender targets in the hands of the relevant Ministry (eg through a loan agreement); and
(v) Generate rigorous evidence of the impacts of GEWE on project impacts, sustainability and growth.

**Gender and trade**

This topic did not arise during the roundtable discussion, but had been raised with the Platform on several occasions during the preceding year. Concern was expressed about the impact of global trade policies and trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights on smallholder farmers and, in particular, women. This had been one of the principal concerns raised by the UN Expert Group Meeting held in September 2017 as a prelude to the CSW; see technical paper. Conversely, it was noted that trade presents opportunities for market growth for those able to supply produce of a consistent quality and that it is easier to promote GEWE under conditions of growth. Recommendation: Explore whether the Platform should initiate a scoping study on this topic.

4. **Forthcoming events**

AGA conference, Berlin, June 2018 with a focus on rural youth empowerment (employment, inclusion, aspirations etc.)
## Annex 1: List of Attendees

| UN agencies | **FAO** | **Susan Kaaria**  
Senior Gender Officer in the Social Policies and Rural Institutions Division (ESP) |
|-------------|---------|-----------------|
| **IFAD** | **Khadidja Nene Doucoure**  
Regional Gender Coordinator Senegal Country Office |
| **Steven Jonckheere**  
Gender and Social Inclusion Senior Technical Specialist |
| **WFP** | **Zalynn Peishi**  
Senior Consultant Gender Office |
| **Zuzana Kazdova**  
Senior Consultant Gender Office |
| **UN Habitat/GLTN** | **Evelyn Nairesiae**  
Coordinator, Global Land Indicator Initiative |
| **Joint Programme FAO, IFAD, WFP and UN Women** | **Azzurra Chiarini**  
Global Coordinator of Joint Programme on Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment |
| **Bi-lateral donors** | **Global Affairs Canada** | **Amrane Boumghar**  
Deputy Director of Food Security Knowledge and Program Support |
| **MFA Finland** | **Sanna-Liisa Taivalmaa**  
Senior Advisor Rural Development, Department for Development Policy |
| **German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)** | **Johanna Klotz**  
Senior Policy Office |
| **Other** | **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** | **Vicki Wilde**  
Senior Program Officer, Global Growth & Opportunity | Agricultural Development, Women’s Economic Empowerment |
| | | **Chiara Kovarik**  
Program Officer |
| **Platform Secretariat** | **Jedi Bukachi**  
Policy Advisor CAADP and Gender |
| | **Romy Sato**  
Policy Advisor Land Governance and Inclusive Agribusiness |
| **Platform consultant** | **Clare Bishop**  
Gender and Rural Livelihoods Expert (consultant) |