



GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDE

December 2023

This document is meant to serve as a GRAIN guide to gender-inclusive language for translators, writers and editors. It focuses mainly on the adaptation of English texts - which are largely gender neutral - to Spanish and French, languages in which gender is much more present.

As you go through this guide, please keep in mind that as far as we know, no general rules have yet been set for the use of gender-inclusive language in French and Spanish. Formulas vary from network to network, among organisations and even within an organisation. As such, this guide is a work in progress. Our approach and our suggestions are based on our evaluation of the best formulas for GRAIN, considering the different audiences addressed across its publications and the importance of properly engaging our readers.

It's important to underscore that using gender-inclusive language demands more effort from everyone involved in the writing process: writers are asked to know their subject and audience better, and translators and editors are asked to employ a higher degree of judgement and awareness when adapting texts to include gender-inclusive language.

We hope that this manual will help GRAIN staff and the various editors and translators that work with us, to deal more confidently with a grammatical issue that is transversal to our work for social justice.

This Guide at a glance

For translators and editors:

- In French texts: the use of pairing, interpunct and gender-neutral, and for which formats
- In Spanish texts: the use of pairing and gender-neutral and for which formats; avoiding the "@", "X" and partial gender pairing
- In what contexts and formats can we bypass gender inclusive language

For writers:

- English terminology that can be problematic gender-wise in French and Spanish and alternatives
- The benefits of better knowing your subject.

I. The different ways of applying gender-inclusive language

In French:

Context: Gender-inclusive language is applied in very different ways and degrees in the French speaking world. There are no specific rules in this regard.

Some international institutions published official recommendations on that topic, including the UN and Council of Europe (2007), and French authorities (2015), but the implementation of gender-inclusive writing remains very uneven and politically-related (it is more popular with social movements, activists, feminists, and more generally with progressive, left-wing ideas).

In writing/translating in French for GRAIN, we should keep in mind that our audience is made up of both French native and non-native speakers, many of whom may not necessarily be familiar with gender-inclusive language. Gender-inclusive language must not be detrimental to legibility. The priority should therefore always be clarity for the reader.

Formulations: gender-neutral - pairing - interpunct

- **"Pairing"**: use of both feminine and masculine forms (by alphabetical order) and conjugation of adjectives or past participles with the form closer to it. Eg: Les paysannes et les paysans sont dévalorisés
- Use the **interpunct** for words where the masculine and feminine forms are not too different. Eg: radical/root (often masculine form) + interpunct + feminine suffix; Eg: les paysan·nes. Some add an interpunct before the "s" for plural, but this only makes the word more complex to read. The advantage of the interpunct is that it does not have other grammatical uses, contrary to the dash / and brackets () or hyphen – . Keyboard shortcut: alt + 0 + 1 + 8 + 3
- Use **gender-neutral** words when possible. Eg: instead of paysannes et paysans => population paysanne

In Spanish:

Background:

There is the need to confront the exclusion implicit in the Spanish language, which privileges a patriarchal system that is intertwined with capitalism. Whoever does not want to assume the existing exclusion works unwittingly or unwillingly in favour of this oppressive system that is audible and visible in everyday life. But it is vital to insist that recipes that seem to save us work, or that sound innovative or provocative, will work as long as they remain legible.

To avoid:

1. Recipes that focus the solution on putting an X or an @, in addition to being written for formulas that are not resolved orally, imply an erosion of the legibility of language. We move from exclusion to illegibility.

2. It is also strange, and here it is incorrect, to say "las y los campesinos", or "las/los campesinas", because in the end they do not comply with any of the feminine or masculine parts but only obscure the force of the language.

Suggestions:

Formulas: **gender neutral** - **pairing**

1. If we say "los campesinos", it's clear that we can also say **las campesinas y los campesinos** ». To many people this seems cumbersome, but in any case it is more precise. There are sentences where you can leave out the articles and say, "**campesinos y campesinas** están de acuerdo en declarar que...". "**Campesinas y campesinos** han pugnado por años en defender sus semillas".
2. In this search for phrasing, the use of nouns such as "**las personas**", "**la gente**" or the use of formulations such as "**quienes** vemos en esto un problema" instead of "*los que* vemos en esto un problema" o "*las y los que* vemos en esto un problema".
3. Referring to the collective: The **comunidades campesinas** instead of *de los campesinos y campesinas*, can be an option in certain cases, because in relation to language, it all depends on the phrase and its context. One sentence cannot be applied to everything.
4. In certain cases, instead of saying "pastores", let's say "**pastoreo**", "**la cría de ganado**". Give precedence to the action rather than the noun.

II. GRAIN formats and gender-inclusive language adaptations

To balance GRAIN's need of communicating effectively (e.g. clarity) with the need of addressing gender-inclusiveness in its work, first it's important to assess the various communication tools and formats GRAIN uses and their different audiences. Then, we must consider the opportunities and limitations that each of these formats involve for gender-inclusive language in Spanish and French. Below, we take the formulas presented above and recommend in which format they can be best used. In some cases, the possibility to go "mainstream" (not gender-inclusive) is offered.

IReports, blog posts, GRAIN activity report, New from GRAIN, translations of the Supermarket watch Asia bulletin, books:

These formats have the advantage, of giving us (GRAIN) full control of the editing process, therefore allowing us to implement gender-inclusive language across the entire document (as needed). As we don't have tight word count constraints, **we can apply the different gender-neutral options throughout the text**. For these formats, however, the title should be dealt with separately and priority should be given to making it stand out (see below)

Op-eds, Media releases:

Although these are not regular formats in ES and FR, we would advise opting for just **gender-neutral formats here**, given the language restrictions some press agencies might impose and also the current lack of gender-inclusive language in the FR and ES world of journalism. Applying formulations, like the interpoint, could affect our clarity with this audience and undermine our aim of getting the media's attention. If the above formula is not possible and/or too clunky, then we should be flexible and go mainstream.

Joint statements, Biodiversidad Magazine, Co-published reports not produced by GRAIN:

For these formats and publications, the application of gender-inclusive language is more challenging since this depends on other organisations' approach and sensibility to the issue. If possible, we would suggest going for the same formulations applied to GRAIN's own reports:

gender-neutral, pairing and interpunct (FR only for this last option), varying between different formulas within one text. However, we should be more flexible in these formats and be prepared to renounce the gender-inclusive language when this text is being produced from scratch in ES or FR. If it's a translation from EN to FR and ES then we should try going 100% gender-inclusive.

Titles, images, captions and social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram):

Given how important it is for titles to be short and clear, the best formulas here are **gender-neutral**, as in the example below. In extreme cases we can re-formulate the title to something different that stills conveys the idea of the publication. As with titles, the need to be clear and very brief when communicating via social media poses a great challenge for gender-inclusive language. Twitter poses an additional hurdle.

- "Peasants still feed the world, even if FAO claims otherwise"

ES version → "El **campesinado** sigue alimentando al mundo, aun cuando FAO afirme lo contrario"

"Millions forced to choose between hunger or Covid-19" ("Millones de personas son forzadas a escoger entre el hambre o el Covid-19")

FR version → « Des **millions de personnes** forcées de choisir entre la faim ou le Covid-19 »

- Twitter: Given the 280-character limit of this platform and the need to be clear, we suggest sticking to **gender-neutral** formulas. At the same time, tweets are published quickly and are somewhat ephemeral. If the above formula is not possible and/or too clunky, then we should be flexible and go mainstream (i.e. not apply gender-inclusive language)

- Facebook and Instagram: These platforms have no character limits but the need to be clear and very brief is still relevant. We advise using **gender-neutral and interpunct (FR only for the latter)**. Otherwise, if the above formula is not possible and/or too clunky, then we should be flexible and go mainstream (i.e. not apply gender-inclusive language).

Note: If we have to use mainstream language, we can mix gender neutral language with it, but it's not possible to mix it with pairing and/or interpunct!

III. Gender-inclusive language in practice

Excerpts from GRAIN article: Corporations make a killing milking Africa. grain.org/en/article/67

→ Excerpt #1

Potentially gendered terminology in FR and ES (in bold)

"Contrast this situation with that of Uganda, where a 60% tariff protects small **dairy farmers** on dairy imports. Today smallholder dairies, composed of **small-scale cattle farmers and**

herders and small-scale dairy vendors and processors, supply 80% of the milk consumed in Uganda. With regional tariffs keeping milk powder imports out of East Africa, **small dairy farmers** in Uganda have been able to effectively supply a surge in demand over the past two decades, and **they** have done so with indigenous cattle breeds and traditional farming practices. The country's few dairy companies have, on several occasions, tried to use their political connections to get laws passed to undermine this so-called "informal sector", but **farmers and small vendors** have allied to stop them. Nationwide protests of **farmers and vendors** forced the government to back away from a ban on raw milk sales in both 2007 and 2014."

→ *French adaptation Excerpt #1*

gender-neutral - pairing - interpunct

« Cette situation contraste avec celle de l'Ouganda, où un droit de douane de 60 % protège les **petites laiteries** des importations de produits laitiers. Aujourd'hui, les petites laiteries, regroupant des personnes pratiquant l'élevage, la vente ou la transformation à petite échelle de produits laitiers, fournissent 80 % du lait consommé en Ouganda. Grâce aux tarifs régionaux qui empêchent les importations de poudre de lait en Afrique de l'Est, les **petites laiteries ougandaises** ont pu répondre efficacement à l'augmentation de la demande au cours des deux dernières décennies, et ce grâce à des races bovines indigènes et à des pratiques agricoles traditionnelles. Les quelques entreprises laitières du pays ont, à plusieurs reprises, tenté d'utiliser leurs relations politiques pour faire adopter des lois visant à saper le soi-disant « secteur informel », mais les **personnes impliquées dans la production ou le petit commerce ont décidé de s'allier** pour les en empêcher. Les manifestations **ainsi menées** à l'échelle nationale ont forcé le gouvernement à revenir sur l'interdiction de la vente de lait cru en 2007 et à nouveau en 2014. »

→ *Spanish adaptation Excerpt #1*

gender-neutral - pairing

"Comparemos esta situación con la de Uganda, donde un arancel del 60% protege a **las pequeñas fincas lecheras** de las importaciones de productos lácteos. Hoy en día, tales **fincas lecheras pequeñas** (de gente dedicada a la cría animal, el pastoreo, la venta y procesado de lácteos de pequeña escala), suministran 80% de la leche que se consume en Uganda. Con aranceles regionales que no permiten la entrada de importaciones de leche en polvo a África Oriental, **estas pequeñas fincas productoras de lácteos** han podido suplir de manera efectiva un aumento en la demanda durante las últimas dos décadas, y lo han hecho con las razas de ganado autóctonas y sus prácticas agrícolas tradicionales. Si bien las pocas compañías de lácteos en el país han intentado en varias ocasiones utilizar sus conexiones políticas para conseguir la aprobación de leyes que debiliten lo que ellos llaman "sector informal", **las comunidades productoras o dedicadas al comercio en pequeño** se han aliado y han logrado detenerlos. Tanto en 2007 como en 2014 protestas de **campesinas, campesinos y comerciantes** a nivel nacional obligaron al gobierno a echar marcha atrás a la prohibición de venta de leche cruda."

→ *Excerpt #2*

Potentially gendered terminology in FR and ES (in bold)

"Sahel says it is taking a "private sector-led and market-based approach to solve the problems inherent in the dairy sector", but it completely sidesteps the biggest problem: imports of cheap, subsidised powdered milk. The project's attempt to shift **herders** to expensive, European-style dairy farming is thus doomed to fail, just as the **Zimbabwean farmers** did at Shonga and all past efforts to "modernise" Nigeria's dairy sector have. This is, after all, the main reason why **herders** from Nigeria and the surrounding countries, who have had no problem meeting Nigeria's galloping consumption of beef over the past decades, have been shut out of the dairy market."

→ French adaptation Excerpt #2

gender-neutral - pairing - interpunct

« Sahel affirme avoir adopté une « approche fondée sur le marché et dirigée par le secteur privé pour résoudre les problèmes inhérents au secteur laitier », mais élude complètement le plus gros problème : les importations de lait en poudre bon marché et subventionné. La tentative du projet de faire passer les **élevages** à une production laitière coûteuse, de style européen, est donc vouée à l'échec, ce qui a clairement été illustré par l'expérience des **exploitant·es du Zimbabwe** à Shonga et tous les efforts passés visant à « moderniser » le secteur laitier du Nigeria. C'est, après tout, la principale raison pour laquelle les **éleveurs et éleveuses** du Nigeria et des pays environnants, qui n'ont eu aucun problème à satisfaire la consommation galopante de viande bovine du Nigeria au cours des dernières décennies, **ne peuvent pas accéder au** marché des produits laitiers. »

→ Spanish adaptation Excerpt #2:

gender-neutral - pairing

"Sahel afirma que están aplicando un enfoque de mercado liderado por el sector privado con el fin de resolver los problemas estructurales del sector lechero, pero ignorando por completo el verdadero problema: las importaciones de leche en polvo barata y subvencionadas. Por tanto, el esfuerzo por trasladar a **gente dedicada al pastoreo a** costosas granjas lecheras al estilo europeo está condenado al fracaso, tal como le sucedió **a campesinas y campesinos zimbabwenses** en Shonga y tal como pasó con todos los esfuerzos anteriores por "modernizar" el sector lácteo de Nigeria. Después de todo, ésta es la razón principal **por la que el pastoreo de Nigeria** y de los países vecinos, que no han tenido problemas para satisfacer el consumo galopante de carne de vacuno de Nigeria durante las últimas décadas, fue excluido del mercado lácteo."

IV. English terminology that can be problematic gender-wise in FR and ES

- Any type of profession or trade: *farmers, traders, politician, herder, governor, dairy farmer, dairy vendor, peasant, food producer, fisher, pastoralist, food sector workers...*
- Any type of identity: *consumers, experts, researchers...*
- Any type of geographical identity: *Latin Americans, Europeans, Ethiopians...*
- Plural pronouns: *they*

V. Tips for English writers and editors:

- On a publication's title, whenever possible, it is important to avoid the terms above and other potentially gendered terminology.

VI. Tips for FR and ES translators and editors:

- With the active voice in FR and ES, we can sometimes avoid gendered terminology
- When translating, changing the syntax can help with making it gender-neutral language.
- The editor should pay special attention to gender in a text and eventually help adapt or flag it for translators.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

For French translators:

- The use of **pairing**: use of both feminine and masculine forms Eg: Les paysannes et les paysans sont dévalorisés. Use it for: Reports, blog posts, GRAIN activity report, New from GRAIN, books, Joint statements, Biodiversidad Magazine, Co-published reports not produced by GRAIN, Supermarket watch Asia bulletin.
- The use of **interpunct**: for words where the masculine and feminine forms are not too different/ Eg: paysan·nes. This formula is particularly useful for social media but also for: Reports, blog posts, GRAIN activity report, New from GRAIN, books, Joint statements, Biodiversidad Magazine, Co-published reports not produced by GRAIN, Supermarket watch Asia bulletin. Keyboard shortcut: alt + 0 + 1 + 8 + 3
- The use of **gender-neutral**: Eg: instead of paysannes et paysans => population paysanne. Can be used for all formats.

For Spanish translators:

- The use of **pairing**: las campesinas y los campesinos. **Use it for**: all formats except social media.
- The use of **gender-neutral**: "las personas", "la gente" or the use of formulations such as "quienes vemos en esto un problema" instead of "*los que* vemos en esto un problema". Refer to the collective: The comunidades campesinas instead of *los campesinos y campesinas*. In certain cases, instead of saying "pastores", let's say "la cría de ganado". Use it for all formats.



GRAIN is a small international non-profit organisation that works to support small farmers and social movements in their struggles for community-controlled and biodiversity-based food systems. GRAIN produces several reports each year. They are substantial research documents providing in-depth background information and analysis on a given topic.

The complete collection of GRAIN reports can be found on our website at <http://www.grain.org>

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