

CFS Side-event 10: Gender Equality, Intersectionality and the Right to Food
Tuesday 11 October 13:30 – 14:45

This side-event explored aspects that proved to be highly sensitive during the negotiations of the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment (GEWE) in order to facilitate a discussion on the relation between gender equality, intersectionality, the right to food and the mandate of the CFS, seeing the continuation of the GEWE process as further stepping stones towards the realization of gender equality in food systems.

The event co-organized by the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSIPM), Canada, the Private Sector Mechanism (PSM), UN Women and the Officer of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) focused on two areas: (i) the centrality of gender equality for the realization of the Right to Food (ii) ensuring a meaningful and inclusive process to continue the GEWE negotiations.

Stefania Tripodi, Human Rights Officer at OHCHR, moderated the event. In her opening words she made reference to the human rights monitoring mechanisms as a set of guidance for the CFS to strengthen women's autonomy and gender equality, and to eliminate gender gaps in food security. She also stressed the importance of the principles of non-discrimination and equality as cornerstones in human rights law, highlighting the General Assembly's resolution 67/168 in relation with the protection of the right to life from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

In the first part of the event, Souad Mahmoud from Tunisia, an active member of the World March of Women and of the CSIPM, explained how in the post-pandemic context, only equitable and sustainable food systems that are centred on human rights and agroecology will have a real effect for food security and the lives of peoples in the territories. She highlighted the need of public policies, instruments and frameworks to explicitly respond to the different forms of gender based and sexual violence and discrimination, including domestic violence and the violence and discrimination faced by women in the occupied territories. To move forward, she explained, it is necessary to integrate an intersectional perspective that recognizes gender diversity, not only in terms of women's bodies, but also in their ways of life and aspirations. She concluded on how the Voluntary Guidelines on GEWE can help generations in meeting their aspirations.

Jemimah Njuki, Chief of the Economic Empowerment section at UN Women, followed by explaining how UN Women has been supporting the CFS on developing these Voluntary Guidelines, as an important instrument to keep progressing on how we address gender equality in the context of food and nutrition security. She also expressed how the current context of multiple crises disproportionately affects women and how we need to frame this context as a crisis of people. She expressed how the gaps in terms of food insecurity, poverty and general marginalization are much bigger for women who have historically suffered from marginalization whether it's based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity and living in rural or remote areas.

Irina Wandera, the Gender Lead of the PSM, stressed the need to act, as every life matters and that sexual and gender based violence are real issues. As private sector, she expressed, they are looking up to the International Labour Organization (ILO) as they are advancing on issues such as the pervasiveness of sexual violence and harassment in agricultural work, where informal and temporary settings put women at highest risk due to unequal power relations. She also highlighted how many of the victims do not report cases and how the entrance of cultural and social norms increases the likelihood of violence and harassment. In this sense, she mentioned how the private sector is making progress and commitments to create safe working spaces, including through the participation in the Coalition of action on decent work and living incomes and wages of the UN Food Systems Summit.

Maarten de Groot, deputy permanent representative of Canada, shared how having an open dialogue and creating spaces can be the foundation for how to move forward. He highlighted how the CFS is a unique platform in bringing together a range of stakeholders, members and participants. He expressed how the CFS has the opportunity to bring discussions on LGBTQI, food producers and members of food systems together. Maarten de Groot expressed how we can't afford to let marginalization to continue and the need to have open conversations about this, while recognizing that there might be different cultural contexts, different priorities, different orientations around this issue. He stressed how it is important to be open and build bridges on the issue, while acknowledging that it will be a slow process of exploring the different pathways to eliminate the current barriers.

Before moving to the second part of the discussion, Stefania Tripodi, took some questions and comments from the floor which asked how to bridge the different understandings around these issues and the realities in the territories, and addressed the lack of data and adequate methodologies to produce data on gender, particularly on the lives of LGBTQII+ people living on the street and in prisons. While answering, Jemimah Njuki, highlighted the importance of supporting feminist movements in them bringing the lived experience to the discussion table and the need to see UN already agreed language only as a starting point, as there is a need to keep making progress.

On the other hand, Maarten de Groot stressed the importance of finding other communal spaces to have open conversations outside the negotiating room as these spaces are charged. Allow champions to bring in examples, this needs to be sustained, we don't need to rush. Step by step process, moving in the right direction finding opportunities

In the second part of the side-event, Irina Wandera expressed the importance of continuing the CFS process on GEWE while maintaining the agreed text and keeping human rights as the basis for all the discussions.

Paola Romero from FIAN Colombia and an active member of the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group of the CSIPM expressed the need for States and UN organizations to guarantee that the right language and spirit of human rights move forward progressive and transformational language that interprets the different forms of oppression seen among women, girls and non heteronormative people. She highlighted the importance of continuing with a consensus based process with a transformative vision that challenges the status quo of patriarchy which is causing oppression. She shared conditions for a good process to continue, which are:

- Clarity on what the standards and methodology are for our negotiations. The process needs to be coherent with the principles of the CFS as the foremost inclusive inter-governmental platform for food security and nutrition.
- Having a place for experts, basing ourselves on evidence free of conflict of interest

Paola Romero also shared information about the [CSIPM Women and Gender Diversities Working Group's statement](#).

Jemimah Njuki explained UN Women's role during the negotiations in bringing forward existing language in UN Conventions (Human Rights Council, ILO, CSW,...) and technical evidence, including that that is not documented. She expressed how the past 7 years have seen a lot of backlash in terms of gender equality and women's rights, and the need to have a deep and common understanding about the meaning of the words so that the lived experience can be reflected behind those words. She finally highlighted the strong energy from the feminist movement and the need to continue supporting their participation in the negotiating room.

Maarten de Groot stressed how the centrality of gender equality goes beyond the CFS Open Ended Working Group on GEWE, and that it touches upon all the workstreams and processes in motion, including the Plenary itself. In this sense, he pointed out to the upcoming CFS processes on Inequalities and Data as opportunities to continue the debate. He ended saying "Diversity is a reality and inclusion is a choice, let's help the CFS to make the right choice".

Stefania Tripodi closed the session by highlighting once again the need to bring the content of human rights into what non-discrimination and equality are.

Unfortunately, there were connection problems which didn't allow Meskerem Geset Techane from the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women to deliver her interventions.

More information about the event and its recording are available at the [CFS website](#) (under Side Event 10).