

SE14: Uncovering the invisible – A feminist call to urban food system transformation

Organized by: PFM - Philanthropic Foundations Mechanism; TMG Think Tank; Brazil; Canada; Caritas Nairobi; Instituto Comida do Amanhã; UNDP

Summary of the side event

Women are at the heart of food security and nutrition. They play crucial roles in providing, preparing, and securing food within their communities. However, their contributions often remain invisible due to deep-rooted structural injustices. A feminist approach to urban food systems is essential for recognising these inequalities and strengthening the agency of marginalized people. The side event “Uncovering the invisible – A feminist call to urban food system transformation” made a strong plea for a gender-transformative transformation of urban food systems by highlighting different perspectives and approaches from academia, philanthropic foundations, governments and civil society.

The side event was building on the CFS policy work on gender equality (2023), agroecological and other innovative approaches (2021), and on inequality (2024), pointing towards discussions on urban and peri-urban food systems (2025).

To combat the invisibility of hunger and poverty in urban low-income areas, the side event linked the debate on inequalities in the food systems with challenges of urban food systems with a strong focus on informal settlements in urban areas. The different speakers addressed their key messages to the upcoming CFS policy convergence process on urban food systems building on the HLPE 19 report.

Examples from community initiatives in Kenya, Brazil and South Africa, illustrated how the right to food in urban areas can be progressively realized through meaningful citizen participation in food governance. Technical innovations like greenhouses in informal settlements significantly contribute to the urban poor's food supply. And social innovations emphasize the participation of marginalized groups in policy processes. [Lessons from Brazil showed were food policies can offer feminist alternatives.](#) When policies support women's contributions to food systems, they help build resilience and promote food security. It is vital to amplify the voices of women and marginalised communities in governance

processes, but this is not enough. Transformation requires to address the elephant in the room and address the root causes of structural injustice such as patriarchy, class and racism.

In several rounds of discussions, including questions from the floor and from those following online, the panelists not only responded to questions on their practical, on the ground work but also were forward looking on how upcoming CFS policy processes can uptake a more feminist approaches and – most important – what CFS member states and all stakeholders can contribute to implement CFS policy outcomes to support a feminist perspective in food systems transformation.

The CFS could advance this important discussion by creating synergies between existing policy products on gender, inequality, and urban food systems and by taking this intersecting approach. Governments and other stakeholders should adopt gender-transformative policies and approaches for urban food systems with a strong emphasis on strengthening women’s agencies and participation in decision-making processes. All participants made a strong call for resourcing (informal) urban food networks and community initiatives, especially those led by women.