

South-South Series: Empowering and Growing Women-led Business



Session n°4: Leveraging Technology and Digital Transformation Wednesday 3 September 2025

HIGHLIGHTS

About the collaboration UN Women and COLEAD

The collaboration between [UN Women](#) and [COLEAD](#) focuses on empowering women entrepreneurs in the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries and beyond. The South-South Series is specifically designed for women entrepreneurs and business leaders, providing a platform for collaboration, knowledge sharing, skill enhancement, market access, and networking opportunities.

Session n°4: Leveraging Technology and Digital Transformation

The fourth session of the South-South Series was focused on **Leveraging Technology and Digital Transformation**. The session held on the 3rd of September 2025 was a success! It attracted a great interest from all regions in the world. 550 participants from various continents registered to the session and accessed all information and recordings.

Moderated by Gayle Gollop, Programme Specialist, Private Sector, UN Women MCO Caribbean, and opened by Jeremy Knops, General Delegate, COLEAD, the session featured five accomplished women leaders from Africa and the Caribbean. They shared their experiences in using technology and digitalisation to empower women entrepreneurs. The interactive Q&A session, moderated by Alonso Bobes, Women Economic Empowerment Specialist, UN Women MCO Caribbean, fostered an engaging dialogue between participants and speakers. Finally, Nina Desanlis-Perrin, Project Officer in the Networks and Alliances Department at COLEAD, closed the session by outlining the key points discussed, the next steps and the opportunities for continued collaboration, notably through the online entrepreneur's platform Agrinnovators.

Find all information related to this session on [Agrinnovators](#).

Meet our women entrepreneurs



Sheba Augustine
Founder, OMI Natural
Skincare, Grenada



Nyasha Denhere
Co-founder, Bono
Salus Enterprises
Pvt Ltd, Zimbabwe



Kemoy Edwards
CEO, Grenada
National Training
Agency



Josephine Okot
Founder, Victoria
Seeds, Uganda



Gladys Yao
Founder, Piment Mako,
Côte d'Ivoire

Sheba Augustine – Founder, [OMI Natural Skincare](#), Grenada

Sheba Augustine, a creative entrepreneur from Grenada, shared her journey of building her skincare brand, OMI, launched in 2018 and rooted in sustainability through the use of local natural ingredients. She has recently expanded into Nature Spa, an in-person wellness experience combining her products with yoga and vegan cuisine in a natural setting. Sheba is a Beneficiary under the Build Back Equal (BBE) project which is funded by the Government of Canada and aims to advance women's economic empowerment in four countries in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States.

Sheba highlighted the central role of social media in her brand's growth, not just for promotion but for building authenticity and connection, using Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp to share her story, showcase product benefits, and promote self-care practices. She sees social media as an accessible alternative to traditional advertising for a small business. Sheba also described how artificial intelligence has become an essential support system for her as a solo entrepreneur, helping her draft emails, generate content, and organize tasks, though she remains mindful of overreliance and environmental impact. To streamline operations, she relies on a "digital team" of tools, including WhatsApp for customer communication, Flowdesk for newsletters, Zoho Invoice for accounting, and Kite for her online storefront, alongside direct bank transfers to overcome local payment challenges.

Nyasha Denhere – Co-founder, [Bono Salus Enterprises Pvt Ltd](#), Zimbabwe

Nyasha Denhere, the co-founder of Bono Salus Enterprises, shared her journey in urban farming, specializing in microgreens, herbs, and smoothies to promote health and well-being. Inspired by personal experiences with nutrition and early exposure to farming, she researched microgreens and indoor farming using online resources like Google and YouTube, adapting techniques to Zimbabwean conditions. Her business supplies restaurants, supermarkets, and households, using a website, social media platforms and email marketing to reach customers and educate the public about microgreens.

Nyasha emphasized how technology has been central to her operations, enabling indoor hydroponic farming, active R&D, online purchases of specialized inputs, and mentorship from international experts. She also leverages artificial intelligence for content creation and cloud storage for data management. Digital tools have improved efficiency, reduced labor costs, expanded market access, and enhanced her ability to identify new business opportunities. Looking forward, Nyasha envisions scaling Bono Salus through increased automation, an online marketplace connecting global farmers, and digital products such as an e-book on microgreens cultivation, demonstrating how innovative use of technology can drive sustainable urban farming while promoting health and entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe.

Kemoy Edwards – CEO, [Grenada National Training Agency](#)

Kemoy Edwards is the CEO of The Grenada National Training Agency (GNTA), which oversees technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Grenada, awarding national and Caribbean vocational qualifications and ensuring workforce standards, quality assurance, and career guidance. As part of the Caribbean Digital Transformation Project (CARDTP), GNTA has played a key role in promoting digital literacy across the country. The \$94 million regional initiative, covering several Eastern Caribbean states, aims to increase access to digital services, develop digital skills, and modernize public sector infrastructure, with a particular focus on youth and job seekers. Launched in November 2024, the program provides basic digital literacy training through multiple providers, covering computer operation, internet use, online communication, digital content creation, and ethical practices. Early participation data revealed significantly higher female enrolment, reflecting a broader trend of women seeking training. Trainees report increased confidence in using computers, managing online tasks, and understanding privacy and security. Moving forward, GNTA aims to expand access to underrepresented communities, create pathways to advanced certification such as full NVQs, and evaluate the long-term impact of the program on participants' employment, entrepreneurship, and overall livelihoods, ensuring that digital skills translate into tangible economic opportunities across Grenada.



Josephine Okot – Founder, Victoria Seeds, Uganda

Josephine Okot founded Victoria Seeds Limited in 2004, one of Uganda’s leading seed companies, established to provide certified seed to smallholder farmers and ranked among the top seed houses in Eastern and Southern Africa.

She shared how the company leverages technology and partnerships with research institutions to deliver improved seed varieties that help farmers increase yields, withstand drought, and access new markets. She emphasized that seed itself is a form of technology and explained how Victoria Seeds has also been recognized for its ethical practices and commitment to empowering rural women by involving them in the supply chain, offering training, input loans, and post-harvest equipment to ease their workload. While she sees strong potential in digital tools such as early warning systems for pests and drought and online marketing, she noted that for communication, as many farmers are older and not digitally literate, traditional demonstrations and simple platforms like WhatsApp remain the most effective. Josephine underlined that meaningful digital transformation in agriculture cannot succeed without major investment and supportive partnerships, stressing that companies like hers cannot carry the cost alone and calling for financing models that empower farmers while ensuring sustainability.

Gladys Yao – Founder, [Piment Mako](#), Côte d’Ivoire

Gladys Yao is the founder of Piment Mako and shared her journey in agricultural processing, which began with the artisanal production of chili powder at home with her husband and evolved into SITRAV in 2016. The company specializes in transforming local staple products, including chili, pepper, okra, onions, and soumara, into natural seasoning powders sold under the brand Piment Mako.

She highlighted how mechanization and digitalization have modernized production, drying, and packaging processes, improving efficiency, reducing post-harvest losses, and ensuring consistent product quality. By digitizing inventory management, sales tracking, and customer data, the company can respond more quickly to consumer demand and expand its market reach. Gladys emphasized the social impact of her work, employing young people, offering internships, and providing skills training to empower women and youth in the community. She also described how digital tools, including a website, social media platforms, and online order management, help educate consumers, promote products, and facilitate transactions, overcoming logistical challenges and physical distribution constraints. Through technology and innovation, Piment Mako has boosted productivity, improved traceability, strengthened market competitiveness, and promoted sustainable agro-industry practices, serving as a model of local value addition and entrepreneurship in Cote d’Ivoire.

Key highlights

The session highlighted the transformative role of technology and digitalization in empowering women entrepreneurs across the Global South.

Mechanization and digitalization in production processes, such as drying, processing, or packaging, improve product quality, traceability, and competitiveness, contributing to sustainable and resilient business practices. Digital tools, from social media platforms to mobile apps, enable businesses to reach broader markets, build authentic customer connections, and promote their products or services efficiently. Online marketing, content creation, and e-commerce platforms allow entrepreneurs to overcome traditional barriers to market access, especially where physical infrastructure or local distribution networks are limited. Artificial intelligence and automation support operational efficiency by assisting with content generation, task management, research, and data analysis. These tools help small teams or solo entrepreneurs manage complex workflows, reduce labor costs, and scale their businesses.

Digital transformation also enhances access to knowledge and innovation. Entrepreneurs can conduct research, learn best practices, and connect with mentors, collaborators, and suppliers globally, fostering



continuous improvement and innovation. Data-driven approaches, such as analytics and online monitoring, inform better decision-making, optimize marketing, and improve customer engagement. Challenges remain, including digital literacy gaps, limited infrastructure, and financial constraints. Access to finance, partnerships, and trainings are crucial to ensure technology adoption is inclusive and effective.

Overall, digitalization and technology empower women by increasing autonomy, enhancing productivity, creating new economic opportunities, and supporting sustainable business models, making it a key enabler for women entrepreneurship in the Global South.

Watch the recording of the session: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pJu5dn2DQw>

Join the conversation on our [Agrinnovators Forum](#) to explore the questions raised during the session and share your own insights, experiences, and ideas with the community.
You have to create a profile to access the Forum.

Resources

- Publications

Cherie Blair Foundation for Women. 2024. Empowered or Undermined? Women Entrepreneurs & the Digital Economy. <https://cherieblairfoundation.org/what-we-do/research/2024-audit/>

D4D Hub. 2025. Women ready to lead the digital transformation in Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://d4dhub.eu/fr/news/women-ready-to-lead-the-digital-transformation-in-latin-america-the-caribbean>

Deloitte. 2024. Women and generative AI: The adoption gap is closing fast, but a trust gap persists. <https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/technology/technology-media-and-telecom-predictions/2025/women-and-generative-ai.html>

GSMA Intelligence. 2024. Mobile Investment Gaps Caribbean islands. <https://www.gsmaintelligence.com/research/research-file-download?reportId=50577&assetId=7631>

GSMA. 2025. The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2025. <https://www.gsma.com/r/gender-gap/>

McKinsey. 2024. The state of AI in early 2024: Gen AI adoption spikes and starts to generate value. <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-state-of-ai-2024>

UN Trade and Development. 2025. Breaking down barriers for women digital entrepreneurs: Insights from Africa. <https://unctad.org/publication/breaking-down-barriers-women-digital-entrepreneurs-insights-africa>

UN Women. 2022. Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/CSW67-Expert-Group-Meeting-report-en.pdf>

- Webinars

Innovation Women Speak!: <https://innovationwomen.com/webinars/?utm>

OECD. 3-4 November 2025. Removing Barriers to Entrepreneurship by Women. <https://www.oecd.org/en/events/2025/11/removing-barriers-to-entrepreneurship-by-women.html>

UN Women-COLEAD South- South Series: Empowering and Growing Women-led Business.

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLV5hWpGiR94OwWlfhb-X6vg_fyzwS7zkv

Women in Business – Women Digital Festival <https://womeninbusiness.hub.brussels/en/women-digital-festival/>

- Podcasts

Between the Binary: Tech and the Global South: <https://www.asiapacific.ca/podcast/between-binary-tech-and-global-south>

Lionesses of Africa. AI feature series: Navigating artificial intelligence in the workplace: <https://www.lionessesofafrica.com/lioness-radio-podcasts>

- Trainings

COLEAD training materials: <https://training.colead.link/>

SheTrades Academy: <https://learn.shetrades.com/>

UN Trade and Development. eTrade for Women Masterclasses: <https://etradeforall.org/et4women>

UN Women training materials: <https://portal.trainingcentre.unwomen.org/unw-catalog-mobile/>

WIDB Women in Digital Business: <https://www.widb.network/course/>

Coordination team for these series:

[UN Women Caribbean](#): Gayle Gollop – National Private Sector Specialist, Alonso Bobes – Women’s Economic Empowerment Associate

[COLEAD](#): Isolina Boto – Head of Networks and Alliances, Nina Desanlis-Perrin – Project Officer, Ahoefa Soklou – Project Officer



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