

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



Session n°9:
Engaging men as partners and champions of women's empowerment
Wednesday 10 June 2026

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.

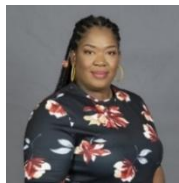
Session n°9: Engaging men as partners and champions of women's empowerment

The ninth session of the South-South Series focused on **Engaging men as partners and champions of women's empowerment**. The session held on the 10th of June 2026 was a success! It attracted a great interest from all regions in the world. 234 persons registered for the session and accessed all resources.

Moderated by Nina Desanlis-Perrin, Project Officer at COLEAD, and opened by Angela Davis, Program Specialist at UN Women Caribbean and Inês Bastos, Head of Networks and Alliances at COLEAD, the session featured three accomplished women from Latin America and the Caribbean and two accomplished men from Africa. They shared their experiences in engaging men as partners and champions of women's empowerment. The interactive Q&A session fostered an engaging dialogue between participants and speakers. Finally, Alonso Bobes, Program Associate at UN Women Caribbean, outlined the key takeaways and the next steps and opportunities for continued collaboration.

Find all information related to this session, including the recording, on the [Agrinnovators](#) platform.

Key insights from panellists



Sue-Ann Barratt – [Caribbean Male Action Network](#), Trinidad and Tobago

Sue-Ann emphasized that engaging men in women's empowerment is a continuous process that requires sustained commitment and active allyship. Drawing on CariMAN's work, she highlighted that men must go beyond passive support to actively challenge harmful gender norms, share caregiving responsibilities, and hold other men accountable for discriminatory behaviour. She stressed that men often hold influence within households, communities, and institutions, and therefore play a key role in creating space for women's voices and leadership. She concluded that gender equality is not a zero-sum game, but requires collective action, shared responsibility, and long-term commitment to social justice.



Melissa Wong Oviedo – [Equimundo](#), Peru

Melissa presented findings from Equimundo's "Journeys of Transformation" programme in Guatemala, which engaged couples to support women's economic empowerment. She explained that unequal household power relations, restrictive gender norms, and women's heavy unpaid care responsibilities often limit their economic opportunities. The programme used gender-transformative approaches to improve communication, shared decision-making, and household responsibility-sharing. Results showed positive shifts in attitudes and increased support from male partners for women's participation in training, savings groups, and income-

generating activities. She stressed that engaging men is essential, but must also involve challenging the deeper norms that sustain inequality.



Mwansa Mungela – [FAO](#), Zambia

Mwansa shared experiences from the Fish4ACP programme, highlighting gender inequalities in fisheries value chains where men typically control access to resources and markets, while women are concentrated in processing and trading roles. To address this, the programme promoted positive masculinity and community dialogue through initiatives such as FAO’s Dimitra Clubs. These groups enabled women and men to jointly identify challenges and develop local solutions. The approach helped increase men’s support for women’s economic participation and decision-making while challenging harmful norms. He emphasized that sustainable change requires long-term community engagement, strong partnerships, and the active involvement of men as allies.



George Kporye – [Golden Exotics Limited](#), Ghana

George presented gender equality initiatives within Ghana’s agricultural sector, where women often face barriers to employment, promotion, and leadership due to stereotypes and traditional roles. Golden Exotics Limited introduced gender awareness training, skills development, policy reforms, and improved workplace facilities to address these challenges. Importantly, male managers and employees were actively engaged to build understanding and reduce resistance to change. The initiative led to increased recruitment and retention of women, greater participation in non-traditional roles, and improved representation of women in leadership positions. He also highlighted family-friendly policies such as paternity leave, reinforcing the importance of shared caregiving responsibilities.



Judy Deterville-Jacob – [Sandals Resorts](#), Saint Lucia

Judy discussed women’s empowerment across political, economic, and workplace contexts, noting that women continue to face underrepresentation in leadership despite carrying significant unpaid care responsibilities. Using examples from the tourism sector and Sandals Resorts, she highlighted efforts to increase women’s leadership representation and strengthen inclusive workplace policies. She emphasized the importance of visible female role models and supportive measures such as paternity leave to encourage shared family responsibilities. She also referenced women’s participation in agriculture and local markets, including women-led farming initiatives in Saint Lucia. She concluded that advancing gender equality requires both male allyship and stronger networks among women, supported by collaboration across communities and institutions.

Key highlights

- The webinar highlighted that engaging men as active partners is essential to advancing women’s entrepreneurship and economic empowerment across households, workplaces, and value chains.
- Men play a key role in challenging harmful gender norms, sharing care work, and supporting women’s access to leadership, finance, and markets.
- Effective approaches include gender-transformative training, community dialogue platforms, workplace reforms, and positive masculinity initiatives.
- Across all cases, engaging men helped reduce barriers to women’s economic participation and improved shared decision-making and cooperation.
- Community and workplace examples showed that inclusive, participatory approaches increase support for women and reduce resistance to gender equality.
- Sustained, long-term engagement and strong partnerships are essential to shifting norms and achieving lasting change.
- Men’s engagement strengthens women’s empowerment and benefits households, businesses, and communities as a whole.



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 need to create a profile to access the Forum.)

Resources

- Publications

ICRW. 2018. [Gender equity and male engagement: it only works when everyone plays](#).
IFAD. 2026. [Rural women, from investment to impact](#).
International Labor Organization. 2019. [The business case for change](#).
OSCE. 2025. [Engaging Men on Gender Equality](#)
UNDP. [Masculinities and engaging men for gender equality](#).
World Bank. 2024. [New Data Show Massive, Wider-than-Expected Global Gender Gap](#).
World Economic Forum. 2025. [Digital inclusion: How to unlock the \\$5 trillion opportunity for women entrepreneurs](#)

- Webinars

UN Women-COLEAD South- South Series: Empowering and Growing Women-led Business.
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLV5hWpGiR940wWlfhb-X6vg_fyzwS7zkv
MenEngage Alliance. 10 Ways to Engage Men & Boys to Counter Backlash - UN General Assembly Side Event: <https://menengage.org/events/10-ways-to-engage-men-boys-to-counter-backlash-un-general-assembly-side-event>
WEPS Deep-dive series: #2 Breaking boundaries: Men as allies for gender equality.
<https://www.weps.org/resource/recording-2024-weps-deep-dive-series-2-breaking-boundaries-men-allies-gender-equality>

- Trainings

COLEAD training materials: <https://training.colead.link/>
Equipundo. Designing Programs to Engage Men & Boys: <https://www.equimundo.org/courses/equimundo-approach-to-programs>
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/>
SDG Academy. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Pathway to Sustainable Development: <https://sdgacademy.org/course/gender-equality-womens-empowerment-sustainable-development/>

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This event has been created with the support of the Fit For Market Plus programme is implemented by COLEAD within the framework of Development cooperation between the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), and the European Union (EU).

This publication has been produced with the financial support of the EU and the OACPS. Its contents are the sole responsibility of COLEAD and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the EU or the OACPS.