

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

Session n°10:
Food security in the face of climate disasters: women entrepreneurs leading solutions

Wednesday 21 October 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°10: Food security in the face of climate disasters: women entrepreneurs leading solutions

The tenth session of the South-South Series focused on **Food security in the face of climate disasters: women entrepreneurs leading solutions**. The session attracted a great interest from all regions in the world. 241 persons registered for the session and accessed all resources.

Moderated by Nina Desanlis-Perrin, External Consultant 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 four accomplished women from Malawi, Uganda, Saint Lucia and Dominica. They shared their solutions in regard to food security in the face of climate disasters. The interactive Q&A session fostered an engaging dialogue between participants and speakers.

Find all information related to this session, including the recording, on Agrinnovators.

Key insights from panellists

Lizra Fabien — Consultant Technical Advisor, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Dominica



Lizra Fabien highlighted the close relationship between the resilience of small businesses and the resilience of the communities that depend on them. She explained that climate disasters can disrupt the entire food supply chain, affecting production, processing, storage, transportation, market access, food safety, and household purchasing power. Her central message was that entrepreneurs should identify the vulnerabilities most likely to interrupt their operations and take practical steps in advance, such as securing alternative suppliers and exploring backup delivery routes. She stressed that there is no one-size-fits-all solution: preparedness strategies must reflect each business's specific risks, available resources, and operating context.

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Keithlin Caroo-Afrifa — Founder and Executive Director, Helen's Daughters, Saint Lucia



Keithlin Caroo-Afrifa emphasized that food security is built before a disaster strikes, through investments in the preparedness of the people and businesses that produce food. Drawing on Helen's Daughters' work supporting women farmers across five Eastern Caribbean countries, she highlighted the importance of business continuity planning, agricultural education, and community networks. She shared how simple communication tools helped women coordinate safety checks and emergency assistance during Hurricane Beryl, demonstrating that resilience does not always require sophisticated technology. She also highlighted the value of connecting women farmers to climate-resilient agricultural knowledge and promoting cash and voucher assistance that supports local businesses while preserving women's dignity and choice.

Rebecca Akullu — Founder and CEO, Newa Farms Limited, Uganda



Rebecca Akullu shared how Newa Farms combines coffee farming and beekeeping while supporting a network of more than 8,000 women. She highlighted the disproportionate challenges women farmers face during climate disasters, including limited access to land, finance, technology, and markets, as well as gender-based barriers to credit. She advocated for women's greater participation across the entire agricultural value chain, particularly through processing and value addition, to increase incomes and build more resilient livelihoods. Her example of integrating coffee cultivation with beekeeping illustrated how regenerative agricultural practices can support pollination, ecosystem health, product traceability, and market confidence while creating benefits for neighbouring smallholder farmers.

Jacqueline Joyreen Banda — Chief Visionary Officer, Jeyie Foods Company, Malawi



Jacqueline Joyreen Banda shared the story behind Jeyie Foods, explaining how a personal effort to prepare peanut butter to support her grandfather's recovery evolved into a business responding to wider community nutritional needs. By connecting with women who initially sought nutritional products, she also created opportunities for them to become suppliers to her business. Jeyie Foods processes peanut butter and other value-added food products, illustrating how local agricultural resources can be transformed into marketable products that address community needs. Her experience highlighted the potential of women-led agribusinesses to connect farmers with processors, create economic opportunities, improve access to nutritious foods, and strengthen local food systems. Her story also reinforced the importance of developing solutions grounded in community needs and building value across the food chain, especially in the face of climate disasters.

Key highlights

- **Preparedness is key to resilience.** Women-led food businesses need practical plans to anticipate climate risks and minimize disruptions to their operations and supply chains.
- **Community networks strengthen disaster response.** Women's networks can facilitate communication, coordinate emergency support, and connect affected entrepreneurs with critical resources.

- **Women entrepreneurs are essential to food security**. Supporting women across the food value chain helps protect livelihoods, sustain local food supplies, and strengthen community resilience.
- **Access to resources remains a major barrier**. Limited access to finance, land, technology, knowledge, and markets constrains women's ability to adapt to climate risks and grow their businesses.
- **Diversification and value addition create opportunities**. Examples such as combining coffee farming with beekeeping and developing value-added food products can diversify income and strengthen local food systems.
- **Recovery efforts should empower women and local economies**. Tailored support, including cash and voucher assistance, can help meet immediate needs while enabling women entrepreneurs and local businesses to recover and rebuild.

Resources

- Publications

Challinor et al. (2014). A meta-analysis of crop yield under climate change and adaptation
De Lima et al. (2021). Heat stress on agricultural workers exacerbates crop impacts of climate change
EU. (2026). The effects of El Niño on global food security and nutrition
FAO (2018). The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition
HLPE (2020). Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030
Kuhla et al. (2021). Future heat stress to reduce people's purchasing power
Langer et al. (2015). Women and Health: the key for sustainable development.
Mbow (2019). Food Security. In: Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems
O'Dwyer (2020). Stability Constrains How Populations Spread Risk in a Model of Food Exchange
UN. Why women are key to climate action
UNCCD (2025). Small Island Developing States: Information Brief.
UNDP (2026). Why supporting local actors leads to change
Von Braun (2021). Food systems: seven priorities to end hunger and protect the planet

- Webinars

UN Women-COLEAD South- South Series: Empowering and Growing Women-led Business.
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLV5hWpGiR940wWLfhb-X6vg_fyzwS7zkv

- 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/
SDG Academy. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Pathway to Sustainable Development: https://sdgacademy.org/course/gender-equality-womens-empowerment-sustainable-development/

- Toolkits from the UNDRR

Toolkit for Business Support Organizations, Chambers of Commerce and ARISE Networks in the Caribbean: Actions and engagement options for MSME resilience and MHEWS by early warning pillar. https://www.ariseglobalnetwork.org/quick/103998

Strengthening disaster resilience of MSMEs through business continuity planning: Locally adapted guidance and five sector templates aligned with ISO 22301 principles. https://www.undrr.org/quick/102694

CARICHAM Business Resilience Toolkit: Additional business continuity and resilience support. https://www.caribbeanchambers.net/caricham-bcp

Family Friendly Business Continuity Plan Supplementary Checklist: Preparedness actions that protect employees, families and communities. https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/reports/family-friendly-business-continuity-plan-supplementary-checklist

Resilience Maturity Assessment Tool: Structured self-assessment of organizational capacity to withstand disruption and adapt. https://www.undrr.org/rema

Supply chain resilience resources on PreventionWeb: Guidance and current thinking on vulnerability, investment and resilience in supply chains. https://www.preventionweb.net/

ARISE Private Sector Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies: Network participation and access to private sector resilience initiatives. https://www.ariseglobalnetwork.org/

OAS Women's Economic Empowerment MSME Clearinghouse: Tools and resources for enhancing women's access to finance, digital transformation, among others. https://wee-msme-clearinghouse.com/

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