



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Food
Programme

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CONCEPT NOTE



DATE

29 September 2026



TIME

14:00-15:30 (CEST)



FORMAT

Virtual (Teams)

RBA Joint Celebration of the 2026 United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation

Webinar on **Scaling Impact, Sowing Equity**: Rural Women Driving South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Agrifood Systems

OBJECTIVES

With a focus on 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF), this year's celebration offers a timely opportunity to discuss how SSTC can help advance rural women's empowerment. The event will highlight how lessons from inter-agency initiatives, such as the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE), can be adapted, replicated and scaled across different contexts. Specific objectives will be to:

- Highlight the importance of women's empowerment in sustainable agricultural development and the role of SSTC in facilitating the exchange of knowledge, expertise and innovative solutions.
- Showcase the impact of inter-agency collaboration, such as the JP RWEE, and generate momentum for further learning, technical exchange and partnerships.
- Inspire South-South Cooperation (SSC) and South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) for sharing replicable solutions that support rural women's empowerment across the Global South.
- Reinforce the commitment of RBA Member States to the objectives of the IYWF and encourage further support for related initiatives that could be scaled up through SSTC.
- Reaffirm the importance of investing in rural women and in women farmers to advance the SDGs.

BACKGROUND

Since 2017, the three Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) of the United Nations – the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP) – have jointly celebrated the annual United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation, observed on 12 September. This joint celebration provides a unique platform to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and good practices among key stakeholders and to showcase effective partnerships and initiatives that have been carried out through the support of SSC or SSTC.

This year's celebration aligns with the 2026 International Year of the Woman Farmer, a global observance highlighting the critical role of women in agri-food systems and calling for concerted action to address the systemic barriers that continue to limit their full and equal participation. The objectives of the IYWF are closely aligned with the work of the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (**JP RWEE**), a unique four-agency partnership between FAO, IFAD, UN Women and WFP, funded by the Governments of Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the Gates Foundation. The Programme represents a concrete example of inter-agency collaboration in support of gender equality and rural women's empowerment.

Spanning thirteen countries over its two phases,¹ the Programme has supported women's access to credit, opportunities for entrepreneurship and agri-business, as well as their ability to influence decision making in the community. The JP RWEE has also generated a rich portfolio of practical experiences, methodologies and innovations, presenting itself as a platform for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, through which tested development approaches could be exchanged, adapted, and scaled across the Global South.

Each of the four agencies brings a unique mandate and expertise in their commitment to the JP RWEE. FAO provides technical leadership in sustainable agriculture, food security, and gender-responsive rural development. IFAD brings its mandate to invest in inclusive rural transformation particularly at the first mile, where smallholder farmers operate. WFP leverages its comparative advantage of expertise in food systems and its unique operational capacity to reach the most food-insecure and marginalized rural women at scale. UN Women brings its unique triple mandate including its normative mandate and technical leadership on gender equality and women's empowerment, with a particular focus on strengthening rural women's rights, livelihoods, leadership and participation in household, community, and public decision-making.

¹ Phase I (2014 – 2021) covered Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger, and Rwanda; while Phase II (2022 – 2027) has been expanded to include the Pacific Islands of Fiji, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Tonga; as well as Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania. Nepal, Niger, and Rwanda continue to be part of Phase II.

AGENDA

Moderator: Ms. Ama Brandford-Arthur, SSTC Global Technical Coordinator, IFAD

TIME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
14:00 - 14:02	Introduction and Scene Setting	
14:02 - 14:09	Keynote	Ms. Hua Yang, PST Director, FAO
14:09 - 14:14	Remarks UNOSSC	Ms. Dima Al-Khatib, Director, UNOSSC
14:14 – 14:19	JP RWEE Video	
14:19 – 15:02	Panel Discussion	○ Ms. Asel Kuttubaeva, Senior BALI Expert ○ Ms. Laxmi Kumari Sah, JP RWEE, Nepal ○ Dr. Olivier Kamana, MINAGRI, Government of the Republic of Rwanda ○ H.E. Mr. Ngor Ndiaye, Ambassador of the Republic of Senegal and Permanent Representative to the RBAs
15:02 - 15:22	Open Discussion/Q&As	All participants
15:22 – 15:30	Closing Remarks and Next Steps	Mr. Vinicius Limongi, Head of Programme, WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger, Brazil

SPEAKERS *(in order of appearance)*

Ms. Ama Brandford-Arthur

SSTC Global Technical Coordinator, Department for Country Operations, IFAD



Ms. Ama Brandford-Arthur has been working with IFAD since 2004, and, in her current role, she is responsible for coordinating the implementation of IFAD's corporate agenda and engagement in SSTC. Working across IFAD, Ms. Brandford-Arthur supports the mainstreaming of SSTC in IFAD's operations, in collaboration with regionally mapped colleagues in IFAD's SSTC Centres. She also coordinates IFAD's SSTC partnerships with Member States, UN Agencies, Development Partners and the Private Sector.

Educated in Ghana and the United Kingdom, Ms. Brandford-Arthur holds a Master's in Human Resource Management and postgraduate certificates in Public and Business Administration.

Ms. Hua Yang

Director, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, FAO



Before her current role, Ms. Hua Yang has served as the Deputy Director of Cabinet in the Office of the Director-General at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) ensuring effective functioning of the Director-General's Office since April 2021.

Prior to joining FAO, Ms Hua Yang held senior positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, including Counselor (equivalent to Deputy Director-General) in the European Department from 2019 to 2021.

Ms Yang began her diplomatic career in 1993, as an Attaché at the Chinese Embassy in Kenya. She later served at the Chinese Embassy in the United States of America and, from 2007 to 2011, as Director of Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She subsequently worked as Counselor and Chief of Policy Planning at the Chinese Embassy in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and later as Deputy Chief of Mission at the Chinese Embassy in the Republic of Ireland.

Ms Yang holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Beijing Second Foreign Language Institute.

Ms. Dima Al-Khatib

Director, UNOSSC



Ms. Dima Al-Khatib is a sustainable development professional with more than 25 years of experience. In March 2023, she was appointed Director of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation.

She has previously served in a range of leadership and management positions across several duty stations with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), including Programme and Policy Coordinator at the Regional Hub in Amman, Deputy Resident Representative in Kuwait, Deputy

Country Director in Libya, and Resident Representative in the Republic of Moldova.

Ms. Al-Khatib holds a Diplome d'Etudes Approfondies (DEA) in Environmental Health from the Lebanese University and France University of Bordeaux II, as well as a Bachelor of Science and a Teaching Diploma in Environmental Health from the American University of Beirut.

Ms. Asel Kuttubaeva

Senior BALI Expert, JP RWEE, Nepal, Tanzania and Kyrgyzstan



Ms. Asel Kuttubaeva has over 25 years of experience working in the development sector and holds an Executive Master's in Development Practices and Policies from the Geneva Graduate Institute. She is a specialist in gender transformative approaches and has dedicated her career to advancing women empowerment through supporting community development, self-governance, and women's entrepreneurship.

Ms Kuttubaeva brings a unique longitudinal perspective, having engaged with the JP RWEE across both Phase I (Kyrgyzstan) and Phase II (Nepal and Tanzania). Her experience in adapting and refining the BALI² methodology across diverse contexts since 2018 demonstrates how a locally developed approach can be transferred, tested, and strengthened through south-south learning. She has played a key role in introducing BALI in JP RWEE Phase I in Kyrgyzstan and later refining and piloting it through JP RWEE Phase II in Nepal and Tanzania. Based on the work done with JP RWEE, she is also currently supporting the introduction of the methodology in Madagascar through the GTM team, which further reinforces her relevance as a speaker on innovation, programme experience and cross-country learning.

²The Business Action Learning for Innovation (BALI) system adapts Participatory Action Learning System (PALS) methodologies to empower rural women through participatory business planning, financial literacy, and transformative gender equality at the household and community levels.

Ms. Laxmi Kumari Sah

Chairperson of the Jaleshwarnath Farmer Group, Nepal



Ms. Laxmi Kumari Sah is an English teacher, farmer, and community leader, and holds a bachelor's degree in education with a major focus on English. She also serves as Chairperson of the Jaleshwar Nath Farmer Group, established with support from the JP RWEE in June 2023. In this role, she coordinates group activities, promotes women's participation, and facilitates learning and information sharing among members. She is also associated with NIC ASIA Microfinance, supporting financial literacy initiatives among rural women.

Through the JP RWEE, Ms. Sah has completed Financial Education and Business Literacy (FEBL) training and participated in Gender Action Learning System (GALS) activities, community dialogues, and International Women's Day programmes. The JP RWEE has supported her transition from a participant to a facilitator, farmer leader, and community change agent.

Dr. Olivier Kamana

Permanent Secretary, MINAGRI, Government of the Republic of Rwanda



Dr. Olivier Kamana is a seasoned researcher, with more than 15 years of experience, specialising in the areas of Food Safety and Veterinary Public Health. He holds a doctorate of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) and a master's degree in Animal Production, both from Université Cheikh Anta Diop (Senegal). He also holds a PhD in Applied Biological Sciences (Microbiological Risk Analysis of Foods) from Ghent University (Belgium).

Prior to his current appointment at MINAGRI, Dr. Kamana served as a lecturer at the University of Rwanda for 11 years and was involved in numerous research projects. He also worked for four years as the Head of the Applied Research and Development and Foresight Incubation Department at the National Industrial Research and Development Agency (NIRDA). Now, as a member of the National Steering Committee and a guest participant of the International Steering Committee (ISC), Dr. Kamana has a strong understanding of the JP RWEE, including its implementation and impact in Rwanda.

His Excellency Mr Ngor Ndiaye

Ambassador of the Republic of Senegal and Permanent Representative to the RBAs



His Excellency Mr. Ngor Ndiaye has served in his current position as Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the RBAs since 2023, committed to strengthening Senegal's bilateral relations and international cooperation.

In this capacity, His Excellency has represented Senegal at numerous high-level international forums and diplomatic engagements, including as a speaker at the high-level flagship session, "Delivering as One for Coherent Nutrition Action," held during Rome Nutrition Week in May 2026. From October 2023 to March 2024, he also served as Chairperson of the G77 and China Rome Chapter, promoting collaboration and dialogue among developing countries and international partners.

With extensive experience in multilateral diplomacy and international cooperation, His Excellency brings valuable insights into Senegal's national priorities and international partnerships.

Mr. Vinicius Limongi

Head of Programme, Centre of Excellence Against Hunger, Brazil, WFP



With over 15 years of experience in South-South cooperation, Mr. Vinicius Limongi has led initiatives focused on policy dialogue, program design and implementation, technical assistance, and project management.

He oversees the technical team of WFP's Centre of Excellence Against Hunger in Brazil, which develops methodologies and knowledge products on school feeding and food security. Throughout his career, Mr. Limongi has contributed in advancing school meal programs across diverse contexts in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

He holds a Master's degree in Development and International Cooperation from the University of Brasília and has authored several publications on social protection and food security.