



SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

MARA-WFP Global SSTC Initiative

Overview

Reporting period: January 2023-June 2024

December 2024

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Executive Summary

South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) plays a unique role in the international development cooperation landscape and is recognized as an important means of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The World Food Programme (WFP) is committed to supporting countries by sharing knowledge, capacities, and technical expertise across the Global South, to foster collective progress toward a world free from hunger.

China and WFP have a proven SSTC partnership, ensuring effective knowledge sharing with and among countries of the Global South. Since 2019, the partnership between WFP and China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) has leveraged more than USD 10.9 million in support of local food systems strengthening and has enhanced the capacity of smallholder farmers, government technical staff, and policymakers worldwide.

The partnership with MARA has been foundational in mainstreaming SSTC within WFP. The partnership has contributed to SSTC being integrated into WFP's corporate and strategic programming and strengthening WFP's capacity as a broker and facilitator of SSTC, enhancing both human capital and institutional expertise.

Over the past year, the MARA-WFP Global SSTC Initiative – dedicated to implementing MARA-funded SSTC projects - saw substantial achievements under its field projects namely the Country Pilot Projects and the Assistance Fund Projects. The initiative facilitated nearly 30 SSTC exchanges, directly benefitting 12,599 people in 17 countries across strategic areas such as smallholder value chain development, post-harvest loss management, and poverty alleviation. The WFP China Centre of Excellence has played a pivotal role in facilitating the mobilization of 22 experts from leading Chinese institutions to provide technical support for these exchanges.

Key lessons from the initiative underscore the importance of strong continuity mechanisms and early stakeholder engagement to ensure project alignment with government priorities, as well as the need for results-driven design to ensure effective monitoring and longer project cycles to enhance project scalability and sustainability.

Looking forward, WFP will continue building its SSTC institutional capacity and will coordinate closely with key actors such as the WFP Centres of Excellence, regional bureaux, country offices, relevant WFP Headquarters divisions as well as host governments. WFP will contribute to smooth implementation and support country ownership and will explore opportunities to expand the impact and the scale of the MARA-WFP Global SSTC initiative through innovative modalities and new partnerships.

30

SSTC EXCHANGES

Key areas of intervention

Smallholder support
Value chain development
Post-harvest loss management & food systems resilience
E-commerce and climate-smart agricultural production

885

PARTICIPANTS

Government
Private sector
Academia
Civil society sectors

22

EXPERTS

Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences
National Grain Trade Center
Nanjing Agricultural University
Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University
Academy of National Food and Strategic Reserves Administration
Henan University of Technology

66

INSTITUTIONS

12,599

PEOPLE

44% WOMEN **56%** MEN

6,238

DIRECT BENEFICIARIES

Smallholder farmers
Key community members

5,476

INDIRECT BENEFICIARIES

149

NATIONAL PARTNERS

Technical and/or Financial resources

60%

GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

21%

PRIVATE SECTOR

16%

ACADEMIA

3%

CIVIL SOCIETY

2023 - 2024

USD 1.7 M

USD 900,000

COUNTRY PILOT PROJECTS

USD 440,000

ASSISTANCE FUND PROJECTS

USD 360,000

RBA JOINT PROJECTS

SSTC INNOVATION CHALLENGE

PEER TO PEER LEARNING

MARA-WFP Strategic Partnership Overview

WFP's formal cooperation with China on SSTC commenced in 2016, following the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) entered into between WFP and MARA, formerly the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture, and the establishment of the WFP China Centre of Excellence aimed to leverage China's successful experience in reducing poverty and hunger.

In 2019, the MARA-WFP Global SSTC Initiative was then launched as an extension of the MARA-WFP strategic partnership with the primary goal to expand China's support to WFP in strengthening their work on Global Hunger Solutions and Rural Development, primarily through WFP-facilitated SSTC in the field. To date, MARA's contribution has been instrumental in providing seed funding and sharing knowledge with nearly 40 WFP country offices, having significantly contributed to strengthening the capacity of smallholders, government technical staff, and policymakers in various countries by tapping into the solutions and expertise of China and other countries from the Global South.

The partnership with MARA has played a catalytic role in mainstreaming SSTC within WFP's sphere of work at headquarters and at field levels. This supports countries from the Global South to implement SSTC, sustainably sharing and adapting zero hunger solutions. At the corporate level, the partnership with MARA has played a crucial role in mainstreaming SSTC within WFP, with over 70% of Annual Country Reports and nearly 85% of Country Strategic Plans reflecting SSTC. It has also helped develop and deepen WFP's human capital and institutional capacity to increase WFP's engagement as a broker and facilitator of SSTC, with the establishment of a dedicated SSTC unit in 2022.

The MARA-WFP strategic partnership has evolved significantly, leveraging over USD 10.95 million to support SSTC initiatives globally, with a recent allocation of USD 1.2 million for the 2024/2025 operational year. Amid growing funding gaps, this partnership has spurred engagement with national institutions in the Global South - including mobilization of over 149 national partners in 2023/2024 - who have increasingly dedicated technical and financial resources to WFP-facilitated SSTC.

2016

MARA and WFP signed a Memorandum of Understanding

2019

- Roll-out of the MARA-WFP Global SSTC Initiative with MARA of the People's Republic of China
- The launch of field-oriented SSTC Country projects in Ecuador, Kenya, the Republic of Congo, and Sri Lanka

2020

- The launch of a SSTC Country project in Peru
- The establishment of the "SSTC Assistance Fund"

2022

- The launch of a SSTC Country project in Ghana
- The establishment of the SSTC Unit in WFP's headquarters

2023

- MARA's support to enhance the Rome-based Agencies' work on a home-grown school feeding project in Kenya and a Women's Rural Economic Empowerment Project in Rwanda
- MARA's support to launch WFP SSTC Innovation Challenge to scale up 4 innovative solutions tackling Zero Hunger from Kenya, Nepal, the Democratic Republic of Congo and India

DECEMBER 2023

- MARA-WFP field trip to Kenya to review the project implementation and discuss lessons learned with the relevant stakeholders
- WFP meeting with Mr. Hongxing Ni, Counsel (Director-General level), Department of International Cooperation (DIC), MARA

2024

New MARA contribution of USD 1,2 million

The MARA-WFP Global SSTC Initiative

The MARA-WFP Global SSTC Initiative is composed mainly of MARA-funded SSTC field projects namely the Country Pilot Projects and the Assistance Fund projects (formerly known

as the COVID-19 Opportunity Fund Projects), including efforts to strengthen institutional capacity for the pilot coordination, management, and visibility.

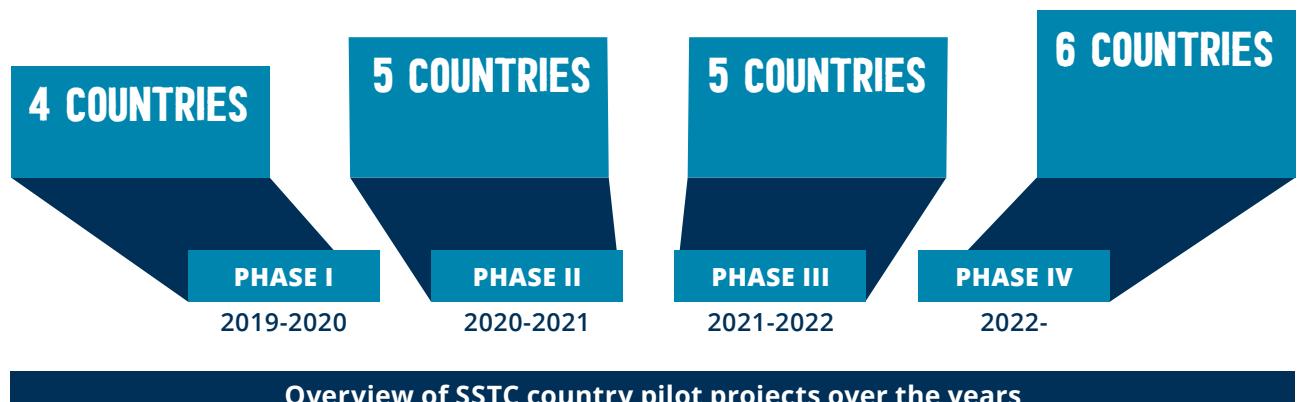
Country Pilot Projects

The MARA-WFP Global SSTC Initiative coordinated by the HQ SSTC Unit with support from the WFP China Centre of Excellence commenced in 2019 with the inception of Country Pilot Projects. The aim was to provide seed funding to projects designed to strengthen the capacity and resilience of smallholder farmers by leveraging China's successful experiences and deploying knowledge and expertise at the country level, with the potential for scaling up.

The first phase of the Country Pilot Projects, which run from 2019 to 2020, focused on Ecuador, Kenya, the Republic of Congo, and Sri Lanka. This was followed by an expansion in 2020-2021 to include Peru, and Ghana was added in 2022. To date, four phases have been successfully implemented across six participating countries.

The MARA-funded SSTC Country Pilot Projects entered a fourth phase in 2022, with a minimum

allocation of USD 100,000 and a maximum of USD 250,000 designated for implementation activities throughout 1 to 1.5 years in six (6) countries namely Ecuador, Ghana, Kenya, Peru, the Republic of Congo and Sri Lanka. The projects contributed to enhancing smallholder productivity in Ecuador; building the capacity of key government ministries and agencies in Ghana to sustainably support agricultural value chain activities; supporting climate-smart production and market linkages for orange-fleshed sweet potato production in Kenya; strengthening smallholder market connections in Peru; and enhancing post-harvest management practices and aflatoxin control in maize production in Sri-Lanka. Additionally, the fourth phase of the Country Pilot Project in the Republic of Congo sought to consolidate evidence and prepare recommendations for continued support to smallholder farmers in the country's cassava value chain.



ECUADOR



THEMATIC AREAS

- Value chain development

PROJECT TITLE

Capacity-strengthening and market access for smallholder farmers through integrated rice-duck farming.

GHANA



THEMATIC AREAS

- Smallholder support
- Post-harvest loss management & food systems

PROJECT TITLE

Capacity strengthening and value chain development for smallholders in support of Ghana Smallholder Farmers E-Commerce Access (SFEA).

KENYA



THEMATIC AREAS

- Smallholder support
- Value chain development
- Post-harvest loss management & food systems

PROJECT TITLE

Strengthening the resilience and livelihoods of smallholder farmers through the adoption of nutritious value chains.

PERU



THEMATIC AREAS

- Smallholder support
- Value chain development

PROJECT TITLE

Strengthening smallholder farmers' capacities in Ayacucho to connect to public and private markets through SSTC assistance.

REPBPLIC OF CONGO



THEMATIC AREAS

- Smallholder support
- Value chain development
- Post-harvest loss management & food systems

PROJECT TITLE

Production of evidence-based, lessons learned and recommendations on SSTC activities with smallholder farmers in the Republic of Congo.

SRI LANKA



THEMATIC AREAS

- Smallholder support
- Value chain development
- Post-harvest loss management & food systems

PROJECT TITLE

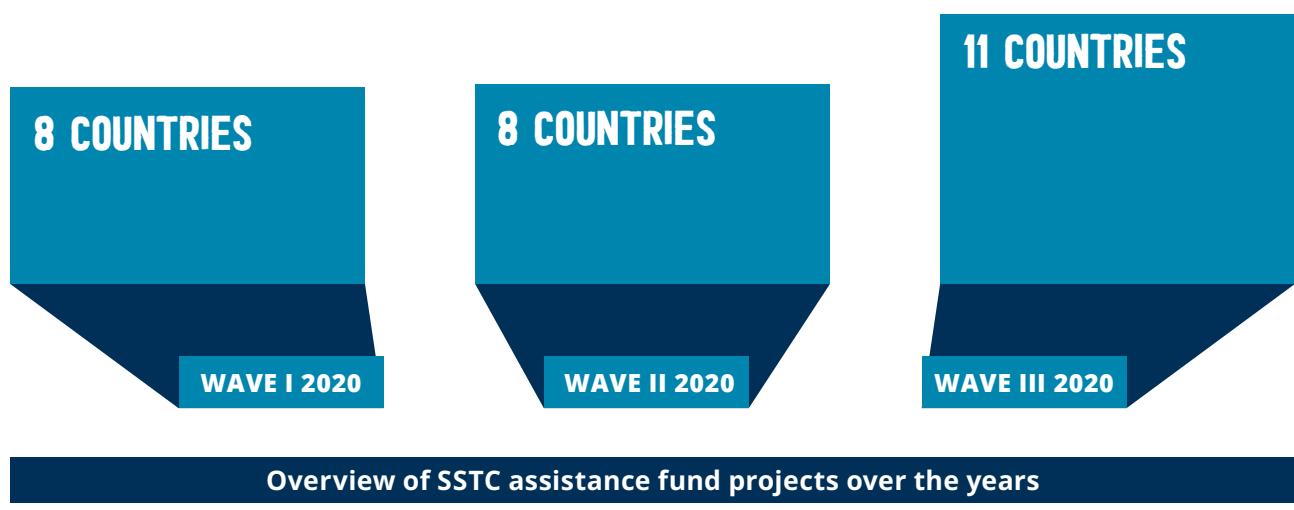
Strengthening the resilience and livelihoods of vulnerable smallholder farmers to climate-related risks in Sri Lanka.

Assistance Fund Projects

In response to the numerous challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the MARA-WFP Global SSTC Initiative launched the Assistance Fund Projects. These initiatives were specifically designed to provide swift and flexible support to countries grappling with COVID-19-related challenges.

The Assistance Fund Projects commenced with a call for proposals, referred to as "Waves." The first wave garnered a substantial number of proposals, prompting the expansion of the initiative to launch two additional calls for proposals in 2021 and 2022. Since their inception, three waves of MARA funding have been allocated through this pipeline with support provided to twenty-seven (27) countries worldwide.

In 2022, a total of 33 project proposals were submitted to the HQ SSTC Unit for consideration in the third wave of the Assistance Fund Projects. Of these, proposals from 11 WFP country offices in Armenia, Bolivia, Cameroon, Guinea, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Rwanda and Tanzania were reviewed and selected. Each country office received USD 40,000 for their SSTC initiatives, earmarked for implementation activities for up to six (6) months. The Assistance Fund Projects contributed to addressing various challenges faced by smallholder farmers and vulnerable communities in the context of COVID-19, including enhancing productivity, resilience, market access, and sustainability in the face of climate change and socio-economic uncertainties.





ARMENIA



THEMATIC AREAS

- Smallholder support
- Value chain development

PROJECT TITLE

Strengthening the socio-economic inclusion of smallholder farmers in Syunik Region of Armenia

BOLIVIA



THEMATIC AREAS

- Smallholder support
- Value chain development

PROJECT TITLE

Gender – inclusive smallholder value chain development in two indigenous communities affected by COVID 19

CAMEROON



THEMATIC AREAS

- Smallholder support
- Value chain development

PROJECT TITLE

Strengthening Government capacity in expanding market opportunities for vulnerable smallholder farmers through value chain development and home-grown school feeding linkages in Cameroonn

GUINEA



THEMATIC AREAS

- Smallholder support
- Value chain development

PROJECT TITLE

Boosting rice production and rice value chain, facilitating smallholder farmers access to home-grown school feeding

KYRGYSTAN



THEMATIC AREAS

- Smallholder support
- Value chain development
- Post-harvest loss management & food systems

PROJECT TITLE

Empowerment of smallholder farmers in the Kyrgyz Republic through facilitation of knowledge exchange and introduction of innovative technologies for smarter choices in land use for agriculture School Feeding Linkages in Camerooon

MOZAMBIQUE



THEMATIC AREAS

- Value chain development
- Post-harvest loss management & food systems

PROJECT TITLE

Food processing of fruits and vegetables for post-harvest losses reduction

NEPAL



NICARAGUA



THEMATIC AREAS

- Smallholder support
- Value chain development
- Post-harvest loss management & food systems

PROJECT TITLE

Implementation of Fair Price Shop (FPS) in Nepal

PAKISTAN



RWANDA



THEMATIC AREAS

- Post-harvest loss management & food systems

PROJECT TITLE

Rice fortification in Pakistan

THEMATIC AREAS

- Disaster Risk Reduction & Climate Change Resilience

PROJECT TITLE

Strengthening the technical expertise and knowledge base of government officers to implement disaster risk reduction and management actions in Rwanda

TANZANIA



THEMATIC AREAS

- Value chain development

PROJECT TITLE

Solar energy for fortified flour production under the Home-Grown School Meals initiative

Other MARA-Funded Initiatives

In addition to the field projects, the MARA-WFP Global SSTC Initiative extended its support to a Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) project in Kenya and a Women's Rural Economic Empowerment project in Rwanda. MARA also played a pivotal role in advancing the inaugural phase of the 2023 WFP SSTC Innovation Challenge which identified four innovative solutions from Kenya, Nepal, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and India, each addressing Zero Hunger, as the winning entries.

Rome-based Agencies (RBA) Joint Projects

Launched in 2023, the RBA projects aim to support climate-friendly HGSF in Kenya, and women's rural economic empowerment in Rwanda.

The project in Kenya, titled "Promoting a Climate-Smart Approach to Home-Grown School Feeding in Kenya," aims to strengthen the country's school feeding programme by supporting the transition to

government-led management. With a seed budget of USD 100,000 and a 15-month implementation period, this RBA initiative will deliver targeted technical assistance to national and sub-national stakeholders, including technical officers from the Departments of Agriculture, Education, and Health, as well as the Ministry of Education and farmer organizations.

Key interventions include advocating for increased investments in school feeding linked to local procurement and building capacity within government institutions and farmer organizations to implement Kenya's climate-smart school feeding programme with expertise from across the Global South.

In Rwanda, the MARA-funded SSTC RBA initiative is part of a broader RBA Joint Programme on "Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment" (JP-RWEE), with an initial budget of USD 100,000 and implementation over 18 months. The SSTC component of JP-RWEE



focuses on enhancing policymakers' and women leaders' understanding of gender-transformative policy implementation through peer learning and knowledge exchange.

Key interventions include identifying challenges in implementing gender-transformative policies, facilitating the exchange of lessons learned from successful approaches, and disseminating these insights on effective strategies for empowering rural women in Rwanda.

SSTC Innovation Challenge Projects

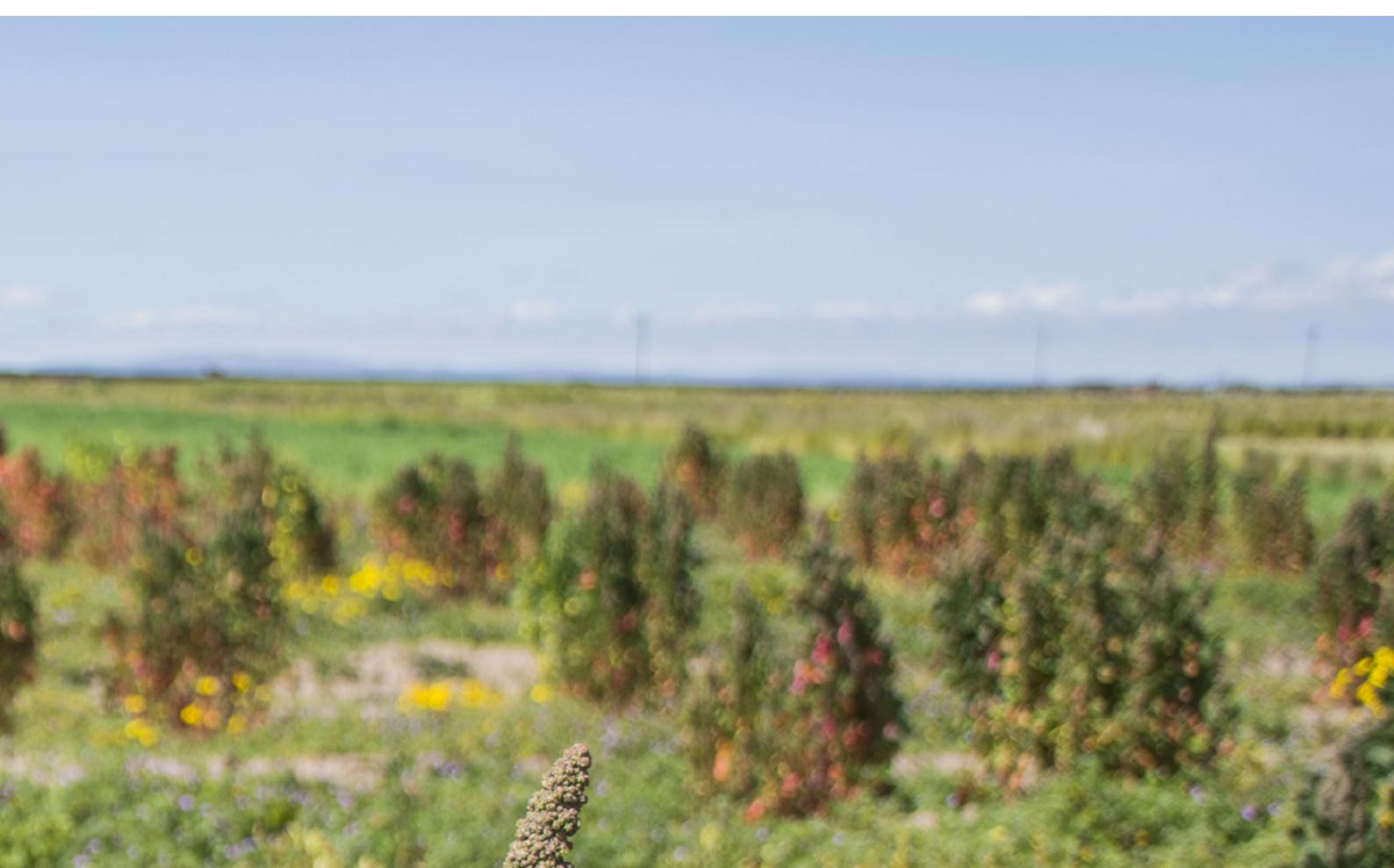
In 2023, the WFP SSTC Unit in HQ launched the first-ever SSTC Innovation Challenge in collaboration with the Innovation Accelerator in Munich that was funded by MARA. The challenge, open to WFP country offices globally, sought to give a voice to innovative country-owned solutions from the Global South to support the achievement of SDG 2.

The initiative aimed to boost low-income countries' responses to global food crises, fortify national

systems, and establish WFP as a credible SSTC intermediary. It further strived to extend WFP's evidence-based innovations and align SSTC innovation processes.

Out of 41 applications from 27 country offices, the following projects were selected as winners of the SSTC Innovations Challenge: i) Digitalized Drought Emergency Warning System in Kenya, Emergency/Shock Responsive Social Protection; ii) Solar 4 Resilience in India, Climate Adaptation; iii) Monitoring Platform of Midday Meal in Nepal, Social Protection; iv) Nourishing Futures: Empowering Women and Building Resilient Communities through School Meals in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Resilience building.

The winning teams then participated in a tailored mentoring programme and received USD 30k to develop a robust model of the solution and a scaling-up plan. The packaged solutions will be shared with other countries from the Global South in phase II of the Challenge.



Results from the MARA-Funded SSTC Initiatives

The MARA-funded SSTC initiatives facilitated around 30 exchanges, reaching 12,599 people in areas such as smallholder value chain development, post-harvest loss management, and poverty alleviation, supported by the expertise of over 25 specialists from 15 Chinese institutions sharing best practices from China.

Results from the MARA-Funded Country Pilot Projects

In 2023, the country pilot projects collectively engaged 4,628 people in total (46 percent women, and 54 men), of which 4,102 were direct beneficiaries, namely smallholder farmers and their associations, and 526 indirect beneficiaries. Ten (10) SSTC exchanges took place through webinars, policy dialogues and capacity development workshops, and study visits. The WFP China Centre of Excellence facilitated the mobilization of 8 experts from leading Chinese institutions for these exchanges. Notably, twelve (12) knowledge products were produced during project implementation.

4,628

PEOPLE

46%

WOMEN

54%

MEN

8

EXPERTS

12

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

4,102

DIRECT BENEFICIARIES

526

INDIRECT BENEFICIARIES

10

SSTC EXCHANGES

ECUADOR

ENHANCING
SMALLHOLDER
PRODUCTIVITY,
UTILIZING THE
INTEGRATED
RICE-DUCK
FARMING SYSTEM

BENEFICIARIES:

50% women, 50% men

KEY RESULTS:

104 institutions (from government, academia, think tank) and 194 smallholders received training on smallholder rice value chain development, focusing on e-commerce and digitalized marketing capacity.



GHANA

CREATING
SUSTAINABLE
STRUCTURES AND
SYSTEMS THAT
FACILITATE ACCESS
TO BETTER MARKETS
FOR SMALLHOLDER
FARMERS

BENEFICIARIES:

51% women, 49% men

KEY RESULTS:

6 government officials participated in a study visit to China to benefit from China's digitalized models (such as grain banks and an e-trading platform for smallholder market access and postharvest management);
119 technical staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ghana Commodity Exchange, National Food buffer Stock Company received and disseminated training on China's good practices to support smallholders' grain storage and processing and improve smallholder market access.



KENYA

ENHANCING
SMALLHOLDER
CAPACITY IN
ORANGE-FLESHED
SWEET POTATO
(OFSP) PRODUCTION

BENEFICIARIES:

36% women, 64% men

KEY RESULTS:

Through a training-of-trainers workshop, 24 technical officers from the Migori and Tana River counties strengthened their capacity to provide technical support and guide smallholder farmers in enhancing OFSP production.

40 smallholder farmers received training on improving the quality and yield of OFSP including the use of climate-resilient techniques.



PERU

STRENGTHENING
SMALLHOLDER FARMERS'
CAPACITIES TO CONNECT
TO MARKETS

BENEFICIARIES:

32% women, 68% men

KEY RESULTS:

133 government officials and technical officers participated in workshops aimed at learning from China's experiences and best practices in cooperative models and e-commerce to improve market connections for smallholder farmers.

61 representatives from smallholder farmers' associations and **59 government authorities** received various training aimed to enhance participants' abilities to engage with local markets, covering topics such as legal and tax regulations, formalization, family agricultural enterprises, accounting, tailored finances, business planning, government financing access, agricultural practices, and food safety.



REPUBLIC OF CONGO

CONSOLIDATING EVIDENCE
AND LESSONS LEARNED
FOR CONTINUED SUPPORT
TO SMALLHOLDER
FARMERS IN THE CASSAVA
AND BANANA VALUE
CHAINS

KEY RESULTS:

Data collection through **desk research and stakeholder consultations** conducted to consolidate evidence from the field.

Analytical report developed synthesizing lessons learned and making **recommendations for scaling up** smallholder support.

Workshop held to disseminate report.



SRI LANKA

STRENGTHENING
SMALLHOLDER FARMERS'
RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE-
RELATED RISKS

BENEFICIARIES:

38% women, 62% men

KEY RESULTS:

214 government officials received training on China's advanced technologies and best practices regarding postharvest loss management and aflatoxin control in Maize.



A close-up photograph of a woman with dark skin and short grey hair, wearing red sunglasses and a vibrant green, blue, and yellow patterned top. She is smiling and holding several large, brown root vegetables, likely sweet potatoes, in her hands. The background is a blurred green, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Results from the MARA-Funded Assistance Fund Projects

A total of 7,971 people were reached through this project pipeline, 46 percent of whom were women and 54 percent men. Specifically, there were 2,136 direct beneficiaries, including smallholder farmers and other community members. An additional 5,476 indirect beneficiaries were reached as a result of these projects. A total of twenty (20) SSTC exchanges took place, predominantly in the form of online & offline trainings. Fourteen (14) experts were mobilized from leading Chinese institutions, facilitated by the WFP China Centre of Excellence.

7,971

PEOPLE

46%

WOMEN

54%

MEN

2,136

DIRECT
BENEFICIARIES

5,476

INDIRECT
BENEFICIARIES

14

EXPERTS

20

SSTC
EXCHANGES

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Country Partnerships Division**

**South-South and Triangular
Cooperation Unit**

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