

Healthy Diets in Fragile Contexts: Peer-to-Peer Learning Forum

Speakers Bios



Dr Francesco Branca is the Director of the Department of Nutrition and Food safety in the World Health Organization, Geneva (since February 2020).

From 2008 to 2019, he was the Director of the Department of Nutrition for Health and Development. During this period, WHO has developed a WHO Nutrition strategy, established a new nutrition guideline development process and has developed a Comprehensive Implementation Plan on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition with six global targets. He has been leading the preparation of the 2nd International Conference on Nutrition and the Secretariat of the Decade of Action on Nutrition. Before that, in 2005-2008, Dr Branca was the Regional Advisor for Nutrition at the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

Between 1988 and 2005, he has been a Senior Scientist at the Italian Food and Nutrition research Institute where he was leading studies on the effects of food and nutrients on human health at the different stages of the life cycle and on the impact of public health nutrition programmes. He has been President of the Federation of the European Nutrition Societies in 2003-2007.

In 1985-1986, Dr Branca has been a medical staff of a Primary Health Care project in the South of Somalia ran by the Italian NGO, CISP. Dr Branca graduated in Medicine and Surgery and specialized in Diabetology and Metabolic Diseases at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Roma and obtained a Msc and then a PhD in Nutrition at Aberdeen University.



Lynnda Kiess is currently the Chief of Learning and Innovation with the World Food Programme Nutrition and Food Quality Service based in Rome. Prior to joining WFP in 2010, Lynnda served as the Head of Health and Nutrition at Concern Worldwide based in Dublin for four years. From 1997-2004 Lynnda worked with Helen Keller International, first as the Country Director in Bangladesh, then as a Regional Advisor for Asia Pacific and finally as the Head of Health and Nutrition based in New York. She also worked for the World Bank Population, Health Nutrition Team and was a Child Survival Fellow at USAID.

With thirty plus years of experience in operational research, programme design and advocacy working in sub-Saharan Africa, South and East Asia, and the United States, her expertise ranges from nutrition analysis, food security, food policy and food systems, public health nutrition as well as humanitarian response in emergency and fragile contexts.

Lynnda has an MPH in International Health from Johns Hopkins University and a B.S. in Nutritional Science from Purdue University.



Leah Richardson, Senior Technical Associate at the Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN), leads ENN's deepening engagement in nutrition sensitive food systems transformation. She provides specialised technical support to donors and leads on developing ENNs strategic direction in nutrition within Food Systems. Leah also co-leads the large portfolio of work on improving the management of nutritionally at-risk infants under 6 months and their mothers (MAMI). She also provides technical support to existing project areas such as infant and young child feeding in emergencies (IYCFE) and emerging areas of work.

Leah has over 15 years of experience in public health nutrition focusing on improving humanitarian response for vulnerable groups such as women, children and the displaced. After her first Master in International Public Health from Tulane University, she gained experience from UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, the Global Nutrition Cluster, and numerous NGOs in a wide range of African and Asian countries. Her first decade of experience impressed on her the intersectoral nature of the nutrition puzzle. She has authored a series of UNICEF programming guidance on integrating WASH and nutrition and spent a couple years establishing a strategic programmatic focus on WASH and health within WaterAid. This led to a second mid-career Masters in Sustainable Food Systems.



Dr. Lujain Alqodmani is the Chief Action Officer at EAT and a member of EAT's senior leadership team. Lujain is responsible for the implementation of EAT's strategic action agenda, oversees all EAT's projects and measures the overall organizational impact. Lujain has a background in global health and medicine. Prior to joining EAT, she worked in various positions, including serving as an emergency physician in Kuwait.

She is the President of the World Medical Association (WMA) for the term 2023-2024. She served as the co-chair of the WMA Environment Caucus and was the International Relations Director of the Kuwait Medical Association. Prior to this, she served as Membership Director at Women in Global Health, a Regional Coordinator of the Eastern Mediterranean Region of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) and IFMSA's Vice President for Internal Affairs. She was also a member of the Health Adaptation Committee of Environment Public Authority in preparation for Kuwait's Second National Determined Contributions Report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 2018. Lujain has participated in several UN conferences and World Health Assembly meetings. She has a medical degree from Kuwait University and a Master's degree in International Healthcare Management, Economics and Policy from SDA Bocconi. Lujain is a Syrian national.



Dr. Md. M. Islam Bulbul is Program Manager for Bangladesh National Nutrition Services and the Technical SUN (Scaling Up Nutrition) Focal Point. He works under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) in the Public Health, Global Health and Nutrition arena.

As a member of Bangladesh Civil Service (MoHFW), he has gained experiences in the Health Ministries related to Health, Nutrition & Population. He was extensively involved in the process of formulation (from development to endorsement) of Second National Plan of Action for Nutrition.



Karima Ahmed Al-Hada'a, is the Planning and Liaison Specialist in the SUN-Yemen Secretariat - Ministry of Planning & International Cooperation, YEMEN. She led the development process of Yemen's Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Action Plan, Yemen Action Plan on Wasting, Yemen Nutrition 4 Growth Commitments 2021, and National Food Systems Transformation Pathways. Karima has been working to bring together different stakeholders from the government, UN agencies, donors, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and business sectors to strengthen national nutrition platforms. This collaboration is aimed at improving the impact and sustainability of interventions through national systems and

institutions strengthening, which will contribute to improving nutrition in Yemen. Currently, she is supporting the national efforts of Enhanced Humanitarian-Development-Peace-Enabling Nexus Mechanisms: Towards Sustainable Food and Nutrition Interventions in Yemen.

Karima was a member of the operationalization group of SUN Movement for Strategy 3.0, and co-chaired the Finance Working Group. Now, she's a member of the SUN Executive Committee (ExCom) and a member of the HDSFS Coalition Steering Committee.



Dr Célestin SIBOMANA, MPH, is the Permanent Executive Secretary of the Multisectoral Platform for Food and Nutrition Safety since July 2019; Focal point for the "Scaling Up Nutrition, SUN" Movement and National Coordinator for Consultations on Food Systems. Prior to that, since 2014, he has been Advisor in charge of the Health Sector to the 2nd Vice-Presidency of the Republic of Burundi and he also provided Technical Assistance to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Secretariat. He has a Master Degree in Public Health, with a concentration on "Quality of Care and Management of Health Services", obtained at the Alfred Comlan Quénum Regional Institute of Public Health in Ouidah, Republic

of Benin. He has been a Medical Doctor since June 2005, with a medical degree from the University of Burundi, Faculty of Medicine. He has particular experience in the Management of Health-Nutrition Systems and in Quality Assurance of Health-Nutrition Care and Services (Total Quality Management, TQM). In Burundi, he worked subsequently at the peripheral level as Director of a District Hospital (Kiremba North); at the intermediate level as Medical Director of the Health Province of Ruyigi and at central level as Technical Director of the National Center of Blood Transfusion. He has

been in the Superstructure since 2014. He is currently responsible for the Multisectoral Coordination for Food and Nutritional Security within the Multi-sectoral platform anchored to the Office of His Excellency the Prime Minister. He speaks French and English.



Barack Kinanga is a distinguished Rural Development Specialist with a 15-year track record in the humanitarian and development sectors, focusing on food systems, economic recovery, and rural community development. He has spearheaded the development of agricultural, livestock, and fisheries value chains to enhance sustainable food production and market access. His efforts have also extended to financial inclusion, connecting small-scale producers with microfinance institutions for enterprise growth in Sub-Saharan and Middle Eastern regions.

Kinanga has been instrumental in empowering rural women by establishing cooperatives and warrantage programs, thereby boosting their economic involvement. Currently, he leads the Food Security and Livelihood Strategy at CARE Yemen, where he is tasked with crafting and executing strategies to bolster food and nutrition security among vulnerable groups. His work emphasizes resilience, sustainable food systems, and gender equality.

A champion for women and girls' economic and social upliftment, Kinanga drives livelihood initiatives, skills training, and advocacy. Extensive experience with food systems and market access that supports economic empowerment and livelihoods diversification—especially for women—and a steadfast dedication to nutrition-sensitive programming and gender equality.

Marlene Heeb has been working as Deputy Permanent Representative at the Swiss Mission to the United Nations Organizations in Rome since September 2023. She has over 20 years' experience in development cooperation, humanitarian aid and sustainability training. Marlene Heeb began her career at the international Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as protection delegate, in war and post war conditions. She then was consultant at the leading Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL),



establishing advisory services and certification companies and favorable regulatory environments for sustainable production in Eastern Europe.

She brings valuable management experiences as a board member of a private sustainability company, where she designed and led the adult education curricula for nature and environment professionals.

As a specialist in food systems and nutrition, Marlene Heeb developed the Swiss Development and Cooperation's (SDC) nutrition portfolio and managed innovative programs and projects. She was later responsible for health determinants, which in addition to nutrition also included environmental pollution and antimicrobial resistance. She led various policy and standard negotiations in these areas.

Marlene Heeb holds a Master's Degree in Biology from the University of Zürich and a second Master's Degree in International Management from the University of Applied Sciences Northwestern in Switzerland. She is a trained mediator with a Degree from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland.