

# Accelerating progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

This five-year Joint Programme aims to economically empowering rural women in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda. The coalition between UN Women, FAO, IFAD and WFP is expected to generate synergies that capitalize on each agency's mandate, comparative advantage and institutional strengths to generate more lasting and wider scale improvements in the livelihoods and rights of rural women and girls.



Courtesy IFAD

The Joint Programme was officially launched during a side event of the 67th UN General Assembly in New York on 27 September 2012, and then in Rome on 15 October 2012, the International Day of Rural Women.

Since then, significant progress has been made by staff from the four agencies in laying the groundwork for the successful implementation of programme activities. In six of the seven participating countries (Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Guatemala, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda and Ethiopia), national inception workshops have taken place and joint programme documents have been drafted. The four agencies are finalizing the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a Multi-Partner Trust Fund, to be administered by UNDP. Some of the participating agencies have been able to fund small-scale activities from their existing budgets.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

The programme's goal is to secure rural women's livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development and the post-2015 Global Agenda. The programme is articulated around four outcomes:

**Outcome 1 on rural women's improved food and nutrition security** aims at increasing the productive potential of women smallholder farmers through their access to and control over productive resources and services critical to food security and nutrition. It also addresses their social protection, and enhanced control and management of local food security reserves. Activities include:

- Work at community level to foster changes in gender-based roles, ensuring equitable access to and control over productive resources to reach a more equitable division of benefits and workload between women and men.
- Promotion of extension support, food banks, consumer cooperatives and nutrition awareness initiatives.
- Strengthening of productive capacities through improvement of food processing, using innovative technologies that are culturally and ecologically acceptable to boost productivity.
- Promotion of access to critical integrated services, such as personal identification documents, land registration, extension advice, marketing services, medical checkups and legal advice.
- Supporting governments to relieve the burden of women's work.

**Outcome 2 on rural women's increased income to sustain their livelihoods** focuses on creating, supporting and developing rural women-led enterprises, supporting women's role along value chains, enhancing their income opportunities and promoting their linkages to high value markets. It will support women-led associations and small scale businesses in overcoming their supply side constraints so that they can take full advantage of opportunities offered by the market.

Activities include:

- Strengthening entrepreneurship and supporting rural women's businesses through capacity building and training, including rural service provision and non-traditional roles.
- Supporting women-led associations and small scale businesses to supply home grown school meals in low-income and food-insecure countries and areas.
- Strengthening provision of and linkages to value addition, marketing and market information, using ICT and other sustainable and environmentally sound tools.
- Advocacy with governments and financial institutions for rural women's increased access to financial services and products such as savings, credit, insurance, domestic payment services and remittances. This includes promotion of better linkages between informal and formal financial services.
- Promoting access of rural women to decent work, while addressing issues related to childcare, occupational safety and health, minimum wages and prevention of child labour.
- Supporting rural women's groups to access opportunities for paid ecological services, within the framework of climate change adaptation and mitigation.

**Outcome 3 on rural women's enhanced leadership and participation in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies and programmes** promotes their agency in rural producer organizations, cooperatives and unions and in local governance. Actions under this outcome area will also strengthen rural women's voice and influence in key policy processes. Activities involve:

- Strengthening rural women's and youth self-confidence and capacity to take on leadership roles in local governance: land committees, community development initiatives, producer organizations and participatory communication mechanisms such as DImitra Community Listeners' Clubs.
- Developing the capacities of rural women to organize into and participate in cooperatives, service provider and producer organizations and/or worker unions.
- Help informal rural women's groups to affiliate with formal organizations.
- Supporting producer organizations, cooperatives and unions to make their corporate governance

more transparent, effective, accountable, gender equitable and age inclusive.

- Raising awareness on rural women's rights through legal literacy, community listeners' clubs and community radios.
- Fostering a supportive and enabling environment, including involving/sensitizing male advocates at all levels to champion and support change.
- Strengthening rural women's advocacy platforms so that they can engage in regional processes and advocate with their own governments to hold them accountable at national and local levels.
- Supporting regional level dialogue among rural producer organizations, both mixed groups and women and youth only.

**Outcome 4 on more gender responsive policy environment for the economic empowerment of rural women** catalyzes legislative and policy reforms for the effective enforcement of rural women's land rights and their access to decent wage employment, social protection, and infrastructure. It involves advocating with governments, parliaments and other relevant stakeholders to deliver greater development outcomes to rural women, including in the framework of Rio +20 and the post-2015 Global Agenda. Activities include:

- Provision of policy assistance to countries: to mainstream gender equality into their food, agriculture, nutrition and rural development policies and legal frameworks; improve national governance for food and nutrition security and facilitate the establishment and development of gender equitable producer organizations.
- Advocacy and capacity strengthening for the implementation of policies advancing women's land rights, including granting of titles to land, joint titling, land distribution programmes and other changes in land law.
- Strengthening of national institutions and donor coordination mechanisms to deliver evidence-based gender responsive rural development and agricultural programmes, policies and investments.
- Enhancing agricultural and rural development policies to advance rural women's rights within the decent work agenda, through policy support, advocacy and implementation.
- Advocating with governments for rural infrastructure development and investments in environmentally sustainable technologies and enterprises.

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- Piloting a women's empowerment in agriculture index and a national scorecard for rural gender equality.
- Organizing a global conference on rural women farmers in early 2015.

## STRATEGY

The strategic framework of the programme is based on the following:

**Status** - Including improved nutrition, higher productivity and income, enhanced skills for entrepreneurship and organizational development of rural women's groups and cooperatives.

**Rights** - Addressing the area of inequalities in social, economic, cultural and political positioning of rural women which prevent them from being part of transformative change in agricultural development and accessing productive resources and assets such as land, services, education and skills, infrastructure and social protection.

**Resources** - Looking at access to financing, high value markets, and decent wage employment, and control over the financial returns of their activities.

**Agency** - Focusing on rural women's participation and leadership in key policy spaces and processes so that their needs and priorities are adequately addressed in rural development policies and financing.

## PROGRAMME PARTNERSHIP

Programme implementation involves a range of partners:

**Implementing Partners:** rural women's cooperatives, producer organizations, women's networks; ministries and inter-ministerial bodies; NGOs and CSOs; other UN agencies; private sector;

**Strategic Partners:** regional intergovernmental organizations and economic communities, financial institutions, multilateral agencies;

**Potential Financial Partners:** bilateral and multilateral bodies, development banks, private sector companies, private philanthropic foundations, continental/regional business councils.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT: THE RWEE FUND

To mobilize and pool resources for coordinated support, a Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) for the RWEE has been established. On behalf of the RWEE, the UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF Office) will administer the funds by: concluding the standard agreement and receiving contributions from contributors; disbursing the funds to implementing agencies for projects approved by the International and the National Steering Committees; and providing annual financial and narrative progress reports on the RWEE Fund financed activities to the Steering Committees and Contributors.

The MPTF Office has a strong record of transparent and accountable administration of over 100 joint financing mechanisms operating in over 80 countries with 46 Implementing Organizations for over \$6.3 billion in contributions received from more than 96 Contributors and development partners. An international Steering Committee of the MPTF will oversee the allocation of funds mobilized at the international level. All financial information and progress reports will be consultable and available on the MPTF Office GATEWAY: <http://mptf.undp.org>.



Courtesy FAO

## COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

**Kyrgyzstan:** The Joint Programme builds on a project geared at improving the livelihoods of rural women implemented by UN Women, FAO and WFP over the last two years. Its formulation is based on a very consultative process involving focus group discussions with rural women's organizations from various areas, a profiling of villages and households, a thorough mapping exercise of ongoing initiatives of development partners and a national consultative workshop. The programme priorities include the following:

- Support social mobilization and strengthening of self-help groups to prepare them to receive assistance.
- Conduct studies on the profitability of various agricultural and livestock activities in accordance with special climatic and social and demographic conditions of different regions.
- Develop rural women's productive capacity and access to markets through provision of agricultural inputs, agro-extension consultations and training in various areas: fertilization; water drip irrigation; small scale vegetable processing, fruit drying and preservation; silage preparation; pasture management; winter feeding; milk collection and kurut and sheep cheese making; entrepreneurship and marketing skills to support the establishment of cooperatives.
- Support the development of the system of governance of the Oblast Revolving Fund and its Operational Guidelines, and support to SHGs to join the Community Funds and access grants.
- Conduct gender assessment of the governance system of Water User Association (WUA), Pasture Committees (PC), Seeds Funds (SF), etc. to support women's leadership and participation in rural institutions.
- Define linkages with ongoing programme on vocational training reform and integrate rural women's training needs in accordance with the professions in demand in the labour market in rural areas, so that they can access decent wage employment.
- Facilitate Public Hearings at Parliament level to ensure dialogue between policy makers and rural women activists on rural women's access to resources and entrepreneurship.
- Undertake functional analysis of the ministries of agriculture, economic development and other sectorial ministries, and parliamentary committees and strengthen their capacity for gender mainstreaming, including in local service provision.
- Support gender responsive local development planning and budgeting in pilot areas and document best practices of open and inclusive governance in ensuring the participation of vulnerable groups and prioritizing their needs.

- Assess main data gaps in rural gender statistics, related structural and methodological issues and strengthen capacities in collecting and analyzing gender disaggregated data. This involves the piloting of a 'women in agriculture empowerment index' and national scorecard, based on availability of data.



*Courtesy UN Women*

**Liberia:** The Joint Programme builds on the UN Joint Programme on Food Security and Nutrition as well as on the Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2009-2013). Its formulation is based on the outcome of a national consultative process, including the extensive participatory evaluation of Liberia's previous joint programmes focusing on the empowerment of rural women. The programme will be implemented within the results framework of the UN / Government of Liberia One Programme on Gender (2013 – 2017), and its priorities include:

- Enhance the organizational capacity of the National Rural Women's Structure to represent the needs and concerns of rural women across Liberia, particularly the most vulnerable.
- Improve women's access to land, agricultural inputs and assets, innovative technologies and extension services;
- Support and strengthen the capacity of women's cooperatives to improve their access to market opportunities, such as the Purchase for Progress programme.
- Expand rural women's access to financial services through the expansion of Savings and Loan Associations (SLAs), with a particular focus on piloting training models for agricultural SLAs.



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- Increase the skills of rural women, including girls and young women, in literacy, numeracy and business development.
- Strengthen rural women's leadership and participation in local governance, particularly in the constitutional reform process.
- Provide technical assistance for local level gender responsive planning and budgeting, in line with implementation of Liberia's Decentralization Policy.
- Ensure linkages for rural women and young girls to wider programming on the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence, as well as sexual and reproductive health services.



*Courtesy UN Women*

**Nepal:** In Nepal, the national consultative process involved women farmers and women leaders from across the country, gender equality advocates, academics, development partners including UN organizations and various Government entities: the National Planning Commission, Ministry of Agriculture and Development, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Ministry of Land Reform and Management, and local governance representatives. The joint programme is in line with the national agricultural policy (GESI) and its priorities include the following:

- Support implementation of a Maternal Infant Young Child Nutrition Strategy at the VDC level, through the provision of a food supplement for

pregnant and lactating women and children aged 6-23 months; promotion of nutrition sensitive and varied homestead gardening with a focus on indigenous crops; and awareness raising for better sanitation and hygiene.

- Assist women farmer's cooperatives to receive government services such as joint registration of farm land, irrigation and water storage and management schemes, agriculture, veterinary, marketing and credit services. This involves awareness-raising on existing provisions through establishment of information kiosks near community markets.
- Support to piloting of the coupon system for subsidies in relation to agriculture services from a gender perspective.
- Increase rural women's access to inputs, technical skills and innovative technologies to increase their income through horticulture, livestock and cash crops.
- Enhance rural women's access to skills and information for multipurpose and diverse forest conservation, harvest and management of forest resources through leasehold forestry and nurseries.
- Provide training on entrepreneurship and vocational skills development in both farm and off-farm sectors to optimise sustainable use and investment of remittance in areas such as village based agro-enterprise development, agro-vets, seed business, and rural tourism and facilitate linkages with business development services and microfinance institutions.
- Support the formalisation of women's cooperatives and self-help groups, and create negotiation fora for rural women entrepreneurs to directly interface with local government entities and the private sector in negotiating for access to services and markets.
- Build rural women's capacity to engage in Local Adaption Plan of Action and other community based processes on clean energy, sustainable agriculture, land and forestry planning.
- Support rural women's groups' to position them as service providers for paid ecological services

within the framework of climate change adaptation and mitigation

- Develop advocacy tools and campaigns on women's unpaid care work and shared responsibility, and support rural women's environment friendly drudgery reducing assets such as clean cook stoves, solar energy, and improved water mill/storage.
- Carry out a gender audit of policies and practices on land, taxation, trade, and agriculture as they relate to rural women and strengthen the capacity of relevant government, non-government, and private sector institutions to provide gender responsive services to rural women.
- Support the Central Bureau of Statistics to generate a national level disaggregated gender info base and a fact sheet on 'Women and the economy in Figures', focusing on rural areas to support evidence based policy advocacy.
- Strengthen the capacity of local government in gender responsive budgeting (GRB) and institutionalize district level GRB committees in local government machineries.
- Promote the establishment of national level policy dialogue fora involving policy makers, parliamentarians and the public to influence macroeconomic and sectoral policies so that they prioritise the economic empowerment of rural women.
- Train youth clubs, radio listeners' groups, faith based groups and media on gender equality, concepts of masculinities and violence against women, support awareness campaign in schools and communities in partnership with women's networks and facilitate community dialogues.

**Niger:** The Joint programme builds on various initiatives within the framework of the 3N Initiative (*'Les Nigériens Nourissent les Nigériens'*), the 'Zero Hunger Challenge', and the FAO/UNICEF/UN Women/WFP Joint Integrated Strategy for school feeding at community level. The Joint Programme is shaped on the basis of various inputs provided by key stakeholders such as ministries, rural women's networks, civil society organisations, UN organisations and development partners. The focus of the Joint Programme is as follows:

- Strengthen rural women's leadership and participation in decision-making through FAO-Dimitra community listeners' clubs and functional literacy.
- Strengthen the productive, entrepreneurship and organizational capacities of women farmers'

groups in producer unions so that they access market opportunities provided by the School Feeding and Purchase for Progress programmes. This involves support through the food value chain, from production to post harvest handling, food processing, value addition and diversification.

- Upscale the Cash for Assets programme with a particular focus on women to strengthen their resilience to crisis.
- Support the setting up of 'One Stop shops' to provide rural women with training, information and integrated services that are key for food and nutrition security, sanitation and hygiene and reduction of women's unpaid work burden.



*Courtesy UN Women*

**Rwanda:** The Joint Programme builds on various joint initiatives such as Purchase for Progress (P4P), the programme on enhancing gender responsive service delivery in the agriculture sector, and the Farmer and Junior Field Schools. Key areas of focus include the following:

- Support initiatives that address household food and nutrition needs, empower small-scale women farmers, promote small-scale farming, and increase access to services, inputs and technology.
- Provide labour savings technologies that are women-friendly, decrease their drudgery and enhance their agricultural productivity and food processing capacity.
- Promote women led co-operatives that focus on the creation of food banks and awareness-raising for improving nutrition habits, and production of vegetables and selected crops.
- Advocate and strengthen capacity for gender responsiveness of ongoing rural development and agricultural programmes.

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- Provide rural women with training in functional literacy, leadership development, and reproductive health.
- Promote safe and secure stay home programmes to provide rural women with alternative sources of income.
- Implement social awareness programmes targeting families, institutions, political parties and men in local communities to champion and support change, through addressing economic and other forms of Violence Against Women, and challenging negative social norms and attitudes, with the use of the media.
- Support organizational development of producer organizations, cooperatives and unions in business and marketing skills, so that they can elaborate sound business plans.
- Conduct counseling and gender sensitization trainings to advance gender equality and social inclusion policies in organizations, and political and social groups at local and national levels. Provide technical assistance to mainstream gender in land policy reform, focusing on rural women's tenure security for agriculture production and leasehold forestry.
- Advance gender sensitive social inclusion policies, governance of organizations and cooperatives, and agriculture-trade linkages.
- Strengthen the capacity of government institutions to routinely address gender issues through refinement of the national educational curriculum in agriculture, food and nutrition.
- Advocate for the development of appropriate schemes for the productive use of rural women's economic and social remittances, and the establishment of safety nets for vulnerable women – pregnant women, elderly, sick women, and women from disadvantaged groups.
- Advance gender in rural infrastructure development for investments to focus on environmentally sustainable, labour-saving and productivity enhancing technologies that primarily benefit Rwandan rural women and girls.

**Guatemala:** The participating agencies have extensive experience in promoting the economic development of rural women in Guatemala. FAO implements home gardens where the main objective, in terms of livelihoods,

is to facilitate immediate access to food, promoting the participation of women.



*Courtesy WFP*

Through the Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative, WFP supports the participation of women in legally recognized organizations, with access to agricultural inputs, associative marketing, development and diversification of leadership and other actions that strengthen an increase in income and impact on food and nutritional security. In terms of business strengthening, as one more step in the development of women, UN Women established service centers for women's businesses– SCEM. These centers support the identification and the GPS referencing of enterprises as well as strengthening organizational processes, leadership and women's rights, training, production chains, access to markets and to credit for women. IFAD supports the Government and other partners on funding initiatives, seeking economic diversification in rural areas and increasing regional political dialogue on rural development, trade, and inclusion of women and youth. In addition to working directly with women, institutional development plays an important role, where all agencies work very closely on public policy with the Ministry of Agriculture. UN Women leads work with the Presidential Secretariat for Women, especially as linked to the economic empowerment of women.

The priority actions of the project include the following:

- Training on rural small farmer production systems: home gardens and corn crops;



administration, marketing and credit management.

- Training on food and nutrition security, especially on food quality and safety, food consumption and diversified diets, and biological use of nutrients
- Strengthening of women's organizations, including the legalization process.
- Technical assistance to improve women's access to credit and inputs for associative marketing and other economic activities
- Capacity building of women for leadership roles and diversification as leaders.
- Support and train rural women for rural development and organization; participatory diagnostic workshops and updating local and municipal development plans.
- Training at the organizational and community levels on women's rights, including reproductive rights and empowerment.
- Strengthen women's influence in the municipal development councils, municipal codes, agendas and programmes for local territorial development.
- Increase knowledge of the laws, regulations, policies, plans and programs, related to agriculture and rural development, to ensure meeting the rights of rural women.
- Promote dialogues for the process of updating and implementing policies for agricultural and rural development that incorporate the rights of women, as well as institutional environments for their participation and leadership.
- Systematize good practices, lessons learned, results and impact.

**Ethiopia:** The Joint Programme in Ethiopia is based on the vision and the strategy of the Government and on the lessons learned from the activities of the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs (MOWCYA). In particular, it builds on successful experiences and lessons learned from ongoing operations that support the GoE to achieve targets set by Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) for greater gender equality and women's empowerment. It aims to scale up the best practices identified and synergies between the ongoing Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Joint Programme, the WFP-assisted Purchase for Progress (P4P) supporting access to markets, the IFAD-funded support to micro-financing under the Rural Financial Intermediation Programme (RUFIP) framework and the support provided by FAO and WFP under the Household Asset Building Programme, which is part of the National Food Security Programme. The JP is embedded in national operations

and the ownership of national partners, as demonstrated by the strong commitment from the institutions involved in coordinating the process.

The programme, which will be validated through an inclusive consultation process, includes:

- Increasing the productive potential of women smallholder farmers through strengthening their access to and control over productive resources and services critical to food security and nutrition.
- Creating and developing rural women-led associations and small-scale businesses, enhancing their income opportunities and promoting their linkages to markets. Women will be encouraged to develop relevant entrepreneurial and leadership skills, especially for other income generating activities.
- Creating a credit line under RWEI for helping women engaged in agricultural, agro-pastoral and off-farm activities, to access financial services.
- Supporting the formation of groups of very poor and vulnerable women and building women's capacity to participate in the preparation of Women's Action Plans for receiving financial support through the credit line.
- Strengthening women's socio economic organizations, such as RUSACCOs, and creating networking opportunities to ensure increased access to markets and trade of women's products.
- Strengthening women's leadership, participation and representation in RUSACCOs and cooperatives, and their use of cooperative services and increasing their sales to market through cooperatives.



*Courtesy IFAD*

**Total programme cost: US\$ 35,000,000**