



JP RWEE 2025 COUNTRY FACTSHEET

Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment in Nepal



Context

Rural women account for 51% of Nepal's rural population, which itself represents nearly 80% of the country's total population. As in many developing countries, women in Nepal have long played a vital - yet often underrecognized - role in agriculture, the sector that sustains the majority of the population.

The increasing trend of male out-migration has profoundly shaped rural communities. With many working-age men seeking employment abroad, women are increasingly assuming leadership roles and taking on greater responsibility as heads of households.

This transition brings both challenges and opportunities. While women face heavier workloads and limited access to resources, they are also gaining agency and visibility in decision-making processes. Empowering women in agriculture is therefore essential for enhancing overall economic productivity, especially as 70% of employed women in Nepal are engaged in this sector.¹

Programme Overview

The Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress toward Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE) is a global initiative with an overarching goal to secure rural women's livelihoods, rights and resilience in the context of sustainable development.

Building on the achievements on Phase I (2014–2021) in **Sindhuli, Sarlahi and Rautahat**, Phase II (May 2022–May 2027) is being implemented in **Siraha and Saptari districts of Madhesh Province**.

The JP RWEE is jointly implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the

World Food Programme (WFP) and supported by Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF).

In Nepal, JP RWEE Phase II aligns with the Government's Agricultural Development Strategy (ADS) and its Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy, which was developed with technical support from the JP RWEE in Phase I. The programme contributes to national priorities while supporting the global 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



The JP RWEE adopts a multi-sectoral strategy to achieve four interrelated outcomes:

-  Improved food security and nutrition;
-  Increased income, decent work and economic autonomy;
-  Enhanced participation and leadership in rural life and institutions;
-  More gender-responsive policy environment.

The programme targets rural women in the most vulnerable situations—those facing food insecurity, climate shocks, limited income and exclusion from decision-making. It prioritizes marginalized groups including survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), single women, Dalit women², Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and Women-Headed Households.

¹ ILOSTAT/World Bank, Nepal Labour Force Survey (NLFS) 2018.

² Women belonging to the Dalit community, a historically marginalized group in South Asia, particularly India and Nepal, who face overlapping forms of discrimination based on their caste and gender.

Key Results

The programme reaches **5,500 rural women** and **500 men** across **5 local governments** – a total of **6,000 people**.

As of August 2025, over **5,700 participants** have actively engaged through **200 farmers' groups**, gaining access to agricultural inputs, climate-resilient technologies, entrepreneurship training, financial literacy and leadership development.



The JP RWEE in Nepal has made significant strides across its four outcome areas, demonstrating visible improvements in the lives of rural women and their communities.

Improved food security and nutrition

Around 94% of women accessed climate-smart agricultural inputs and techniques, enhancing productivity and resilience.

About 70% of women improved their knowledge of nutrition, health and food safety, enabling them to make informed decisions and improve household quality of life.

Around 10% of women farmers reduced drudgery saved time by accessing shared agricultural machinery through **2 Custom Hiring Service Centers (CHSCs)**.

About 60% rural farmers strengthened access to climate, weather, and market information by being linked to Information and Communication Technology ICT-based advisory systems through a mobile application.

Increased income, decent work and economic autonomy

Approximately 75% of women enhanced their financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills, enabling better business planning and income generation.

One in three participants reported improved household financial decision-making.

1,929 informal micro businesses were established or scaled up, generating income and reflecting growing economic independence.

About 80% women farmers accessed livestock insurance, improving their financial protection against climate-related shocks.

About 20% of women farmers created sustainable supply chains by linking with **37 public schools** for marketing their agricultural produce.

Enhanced participation and leadership in rural life and institutions

Nearly all women strengthened their collective agency through **200 women's farmer groups**, fostering solidarity and shared learning.

Over half of participating women built leadership capacity and actively engaged in local governance and decision-making processes.

More gender-responsive policy environment

More than 70% of rural women engaged in the initiative have gained **legal and policy awareness** on economic and gender-related issues, empowering them to advocate for their rights.

119 government officials and 10 policymaking institutions received training on gender-responsive agriculture and climate-resilient policies.

5 Gender Equality & Social Inclusion (GESI) audits were conducted, leading to the reactivation of GESI working groups in **5 participating local governments**, reinforcing institutional commitment to inclusion.

These results reflect the programme's holistic and inclusive approach, ensuring that rural women—especially those from marginalized communities—are not only beneficiaries but active agents of change in Nepal's development landscape.



Looking Forward

The JP RWEE Nepal will intensify efforts across all four outcomes to ensure sustainable impact by the programme's end in May 2027.

Key activities include **expanding access to climate-smart agricultural inputs, technology and practices, post-harvest innovations** and **ICT-based farming tools** to enhance food security and resilience.

Women farmers will be supported in developing **collective marketing systems and small-scale agri-processing enterprises** to boost income and value addition. **Financial literacy, entrepreneurship** and **access to social protection and insurance** will be scaled up, with targeted support for landless women and those facing time poverty. Leadership and governance participation will be strengthened through **mentorship from elected women leaders, gender audits** and **capacity-building for women's groups and cooperatives**.

Gender-responsive policy environments will be advanced through technical support to local governments on **budgeting, planning and data systems, alongside public hearings and advocacy platforms**.

The programme will also promote inclusive governance by **linking women to cooperatives and networks**, and facilitating **peer learning and strategic collaboration** with local stakeholders. The JP RWEE will remain adaptive, leveraging partnerships and community engagement to safeguard progress.

These efforts aim to institutionalize good practices, ensure sustainability and position rural women as key agents of change in Nepal's development landscape.

See more information about the JP RWEE [here](#).

You may also find interesting [Good Practice on Empowering Women Through Community Dialogues in Nepal](#) and [human interest stories](#) from the JP RWEE in Nepal.



Mamata Chaudhary, Mirjapur village, Siraha, Madhesh Province.

Mamata is married with one child and comes from the Indigenous Tharu community. Her family depends primarily on farming, but three years ago, after they incurred a large debt to cover their son's medical expenses, her husband left to work in Malaysia.

Having married young, Mamata faced many challenges. The delivery of her first child was difficult, and she later realized it may have been due to a lack of care and nutrition.

The turning point came when Mamata joined the Laligurans women's farmer group. Through the group, she found a new source of income, gained knowledge on nutrition and began to challenge traditional gender barriers, stepping beyond household responsibilities and contributing to the family livelihood. The nutrition training helped her adopt healthier eating practices, improve her family's diet and ensure better care for her children, positively affecting their overall health and well-being. She now earns around NPR 40,000 annually [approx. USD 280] from selling vegetables and other produce from her plot of land, making it a major source of income alongside her husband's remittances. *"The concept of selling vegetables was so remote. We didn't grow much to begin with, but if there was any extra, we let it rot in the field. Now I have doubled my vegetable plot size because the income from it is making a difference in our life,"* Mamata said.

Today, Mamata is most proud of her work as a lead farmer. She supports 13 women's group in her community, following up on training, crop calendar and women's issues. *"Earlier, I was just someone's wife or daughter-in-law. But now, I have my own identity. When I speak, people listen,"* she said.

Mamata and other women in the community now confidently engage with local leaders—mostly men—and are even planning to demand women's representation in local government. She is happier, her family is eating healthier, and she is determined to continue working for women's empowerment.

THE JOINT PROGRAMME ON ACCELERATING PROGRESS TOWARDS RURAL WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (JP RWEE)

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