



JOINT PROGRAMME: Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment



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JP RWEE 2026 FACTSHEET

Context

Rural women are key agents of change who are at the forefront of agricultural production, supporting food security and nutrition. The income they generate contributes to rural economies, as well as to the health and wellbeing of their families and communities.

Despite their critical role in the eradication of poverty, rural women continue to face systemic barriers that limit their access to productive resources, opportunities and services, and they carry a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work. Rural women are largely excluded from decision-making structures and processes. Deeply entrenched discriminatory social norms and patriarchal systems further impede their ability to fully participate in and equally benefit from economic activities. These constraints are further exacerbated during times of conflict, climate change, environmental degradation and crisis.

Programme Overview

The Joint Programme on 'Accelerating Progress Towards 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.

Thanks to the generous support of **Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) and the Gates Foundation**, the programme is implementing Phase II.

The programme has been 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 local implementing partners since 2014.

PHASE I 2014-2021

Ethiopia
Guatemala
Kyrgyzstan
Liberia
Nepal
Niger
Rwanda

PHASE II 2022-2027

Nepal
Niger
Rwanda
The United Republic of
Tanzania
Tunisia
Pacific Islands (Fiji,
Kiribati, Solomon Islands
and Tonga)

The JP RWEE builds on each agency's comparative advantages and adopts a holistic approach to improve the status of women and their families and communities in rural areas and 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;



A more gender-responsive policy environment.

To achieve these outcomes, the programme applies the following strategies:

- Working with partners, including national and local government, NGOs, civil society, the private sector and large-scale development programmes to provide on-the-ground support.
- Developing individual, collective and institutional capacities to contribute to knowledge and skills transfer, ensuring sustainability of the implemented activities.
- Working with and through women's groups and individual rural women farmers' cooperatives to enhance economic and social capital;
- Leveraging information and communication technologies (ICTs), digital agriculture and innovative solutions to improve efficiency;
- Applying participatory approaches throughout the programme's design and implementation to ensure it is appropriately tailored to local contexts.

To ensure no one is left behind, the programme specifically targets the rural women living in the poorest and most vulnerable situations facing food insecurity and malnutrition. JP RWEE has also prioritised the inclusion of the most marginalized groups, including survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), people living with HIV, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and women-headed households.

Building on lessons learned from Phase I, Phase II incorporates two cross-cutting lenses:



A **resilience lens** enables rural women and their households to strengthen social capital fostering **social resilience**; enhance capacities and access to decent employment promoting **economic resilience**; and build capacities in climate-smart agricultural practices advancing **resilience to climate change**.



A **gender-transformative lens** addresses the root causes of inequalities, increases individual and collective agency, redresses unequal power relations, and changes discriminatory policies and social norms at all levels (including household, community and government levels).

JP RWEE's approaches foster an environment of inclusivity and reflection that supports social change and empowers women as agents of change, ensuring that interventions are tailored to the specific needs and contexts of programme participants and communities. These approaches include, among others:

Gender Action Learning System (GALS) is a household methodology that empowers women to visualize and actualize their economic and development goals. The tool focuses on engaging both men and women at the household level to challenge and change deep-rooted stereotyped gender norms.

Business Action Learning for Innovation (BALI) methodology promotes women's business innovation and diversification of their opportunities within local economies.

The Farmer Field Schools (FFS) learning approach reinforces technical capacity and supports positive changes in attitudes, behaviours and practices to transform gender relations.

Dimitra Clubs are community listening clubs where women and men identify, discuss and take collective action on gender and development issues.

Community-based Participatory Planning (CBPP) brings together communities, partners and local government to identify issues and tailor programme responses to local requirements.

Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and Planning is a systematic process of embedding a gender perspective throughout the entire budget cycle to achieve gender equality and ensure public resources benefit everyone equitably.



Key Results

The programme has directly reached **over 130 000 rural women and men** since Phase I and is expected to reach an additional 10 000 women and men by the end of Phase II (2027), generating measurable gains across rural women's livelihoods, resilience, and agency.

Food insecurity declined markedly across the implementing countries, while agricultural productivity rose substantially, driven by a broad expansion in climate-smart practices and access to improved inputs and technologies.

These gains are translating into stronger economic outcomes, with higher on-farm and off-farm earnings and deeper engagement in value chains. At the same time, women's agency has strengthened considerably, reflected in sharp growth in leadership and participation in decision-making structures. This progress has been reinforced by the adoption of new policy frameworks during the year and a major expansion in women's awareness of legal rights.

The following figures illustrate consolidated results achieved since the start of Phase II (2022–2025):¹

Food Security & Nutrition

Improved agricultural capacity and household resilience



2025 target reached

+57%

Women's agricultural productivity increase



2025 target reached

-14%

Proportion of households with moderate/severe food insecurity



2025 target reached

+80%

Women's dietary diversity increase
5,735 women



2025 target reached

-29%

Proportion of households spending 65%+ of budget on food
indicating reduced food expenditure pressure



2025 target reached

+118%

Rural women's access to climate-smart inputs
10,336 → 22,494



2025 target reached

7,454

Rural women adopted improved agricultural techniques



34%

Communities improving capacity to manage climate shocks
shift from 29 to 50 communities

Income & Decent Work

Increased economic autonomy and financial inclusion



2025 target reached

+46%

Women's average annual farm income
(USD 489 → USD 693)



2025 target reached

+27%

Women's average annual off-farm income
reaching USD 1,432 in 2025



2025 target reached

USD 57.4M

Total annual farm and off-farm income generated



2025 target reached

USD 16M

Additional annual income compared to baseline



2025 target reached

152%

Women using gender-responsive financial services
3,952 women in 2025



2025 target reached

+3%

Women's control over income and expenditures
showing that income gains are emerging faster than changes in financial decision-making power

Participation & Leadership

Enhanced involvement in community decision-making



2025 target reached

+161%

Women's membership in community decision-making structures



2025 target reached

6,597

More women leaders active in decision-making bodies



2025 target reached

+124%

Women in leadership roles
8,326 women in 2025



2025 target reached

2,839

Women in elected local governance structures
(up from 0)



69% vs 77%

Women's vs men's Time Adequacy Score
(workload balance and agency)

Policy Environment

More gender-responsive legal frameworks and awareness



2025 target reached

7

Gender-responsive legal frameworks revised/adopted



2025 target reached

+180%

Rural women with increased awareness of legal rights
(16,426 women)



2025 target reached

515

More rural women engaged in government meetings



2025 target reached

170

Women's machineries and policymakers with strengthened capacities



31

Women's groups linked to advocacy networks and alliances

¹ The data provided do not include Rwanda.

Mid-term Review

The year 2025 marked the midpoint of the programme implementation, and country teams conducted Mid-term Reviews (MTRs) to support evidence-based decision-making for the 2026 Annual Work Plan review, clarify realistic expectations for sustainability and institutionalization by 2027, and contribute to ongoing reflections on the future evolution of the programme.

The MTR confirmed that the JP RWEE has established solid foundations across its core areas of intervention, with consistent evidence of progress across countries. At the same time, the MTR highlighted areas that require further consolidation, including strengthening economic pathways, deepen market integration, and secure institutional anchoring to ensure the sustainability and scalability of outcomes beyond the programme cycle.

The review was structured around four core research questions: **(i) Relevance & Adaptability, (ii) Efficiency & Synergy, (iii) Effectiveness & Impact, (iv) Sustainability & Institutionalization**, and demonstrated that:

- The programme remains highly relevant across all contexts, with strong alignment to national priorities and rural women's needs.
- The joint and integrated delivery model is a core strength of JP RWEE, particularly through effective sequencing and agency complementarity at community level.

- The programme delivers strong results in food security, agency, and participation, demonstrating the effectiveness of its integrated and gender-transformative approach.
- JP RWEE has successfully achieved policy alignment and initial institutional entry points across countries.

See more details [here](#).

Looking Forward

As the programme is approaching the endline of Phase II, it seeks to integrate key learnings and ensure sustainability of the achieved results, including through the development of exit strategies that support the continuation of rural women's economic empowerment in evolving contexts.

The MTR highlights the need to frame the next generation of JP RWEE both as a scale-up of this proven model to similar contexts and, in parallel, as an evolution of the model for those countries of Phase I and II entering a consolidation stage.

Emerging reflections point to a more differentiated strategy, combining consolidation of results in some contexts with stronger system-level engagement in others. This would include positioning JP RWEE to more explicitly support market integration, institutional embedding, and improved access to public and private financing.

Looking ahead, a **"JP RWEE+"** could play a more explicit role as a system-level accelerator for rural women's economic empowerment, with greater focus on sustainable economic pathways, climate-resilient livelihoods, piloted by government and financing systems.

Shubhakala Kumari Sah, 42, Siraha, Nepal

At 18, Shubhakala Kumari Sah set aside her dreams to care for her family. For the next 24 years, her own education remained on hold—until she found the courage to begin again. At 42, she passed her Grade 12 exams, inspiring her entire village and proving that it is never too late to learn.

In a community challenged by migration and climate hardship, Shubhakala keeps going. Even during severe drought, she carried water day and night to sustain her crops. Through the JP RWEE, she learned new climate-smart farming practices and revived millet cultivation—turning it into both income and nutrition for her family.

Today, as secretary of her women's group, Shubhakala speaks with confidence, supports other women, and helps drive change in her community. For her, empowerment is not just about farming—it is about knowledge, voice, and opportunity for future generations.

"People grow old," she says, "but knowledge never does."



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<https://jprwee.org/>

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