



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



THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA 2026 FACTSHEET

Context

In the United Republic of Tanzania, women comprise about 51.6%¹ of the population and demonstrate high labor force participation, at around 80.3%². Nearly two-thirds³ of the population live in rural areas, where women—representing one-third of the total population—play a central role in the economy yet remain disproportionately disadvantaged.

Women are largely concentrated in informal and low-productivity sectors, earn less than men, and face persistent barriers to accessing finance, assets, and markets. Women-headed households typically own fewer assets, and women are less likely to hold land titles, limiting their ability to invest and improve productivity.

These inequalities are most visible in agriculture, where women are heavily engaged but primarily at subsistence level within smallholder, rain-fed systems. They have limited access to inputs, technologies, extension services, and cooperatives, resulting in lower productivity and incomes. Climate change further exacerbates vulnerabilities, as women rely heavily on rain-fed agriculture but have fewer resources to adapt.

Women are also underrepresented in local governance and decision-making structures, restricting their influence over resource allocation and community development.

The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania has made notable progress in gender equality informed by the Revised Land policy 2023, National Gender and Women Development Policy (2023) and National Clean Cooking Strategy (2024–2034).

Despite this, deep structural inequalities persist. Key barriers to rural women's empowerment include limited land rights, restricted access to finance and markets, low levels of technical and digital skills, heavy unpaid care work, and persistent discriminatory gender norms that constrain mobility and decision-making.

Programme overview

In the United Republic of Tanzania, the Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE) Phase II is being implemented in central regions of Tanzania Mainland namely Singida (Ikungi) and Dodoma (Chamwino) and in Zanzibar (Kusini and Kati Unguja).

The programme is jointly implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the World Food Programme (WFP) and local partners, and supported by Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF).

¹ National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). 2022. Population and Housing Census.

² World Bank. 2025. Gender Data Portal – the United Republic of Tanzania, Labour force participation rate (female).

³ World Bank. World Development Indicators – Rural population (% of total population), the United Republic of Tanzania.

JP RWEE interventions are strongly anchored in the United Republic of Tanzania's national and sub-national priorities such as the Agricultural Sector Development Programme (ASDP II), the Tanzania's UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and national visions such as Vision 2025 (transitioning into Vision 2050).

The programme aims to reach 40,000 programme participants, 85% of whom are smallholder rural women farmers and 15% men. It targets specifically youth, informal workers, women living with disabilities, and marginalized groups.

The programme focuses on four outcome areas:

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

To achieve these outcomes, JP RWEE uses such approaches as climate-smart agriculture training, Gender-transformative Approaches (GTAs), financial inclusion by strengthening Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), participatory approaches to address gender inequalities, providing policy support for gender-responsive policy analysis and budgeting.

Overall, JP RWEE applies an integrated, multi-agency approach. It also adopts a value chain and systems approach linking climate-smart production, market access, financial inclusion, and policy engagement, ensuring productivity gains translate into sustainable incomes within an enabling environment.

Key results

In 2025, JP RWEE in the United Republic of Tanzania has made significant achievements across the four interlinked outcome areas:


Food Security & Nutrition
 Improved agricultural capacity and household resilience

-5.7% Households with moderate or severe food insecurity decreased	89% Households adopted climate-smart agriculture
44% Women achieved minimum dietary diversity	Persistent barriers Social norms and household priorities continued to influence food allocation limiting translation of production gains into diets


Income & Decent Work
 Increased economic autonomy and financial inclusion

+20% Average annual farm income increased From USD 89 to USD 107	+209% Off-farm income tripled From USD 98 to USD 303
27% More women participating in savings groups	67% Women accessing and using digital financial services Showing growing financial inclusion
Value addition Women expanded micro-enterprises and higher-value products sunflower oil, noodles, cereal flour and seaweed-based soaps/oils	


Participation & Leadership
 Enhanced involvement in community decision-making

+34% Increase in women's representation in community bodies 204 more women leaders	90% Women participate in household income decisions Up from 87% at baseline
65% Women now influence major household decisions 204 more women leaders	+2.7% Improvement in household agency adequacy From 87.0% to 89.7%
Formal leadership 50 programme-supported women were elected as ward councillors, village councillors and hamlet leaders	


Policy Environment
 More gender-responsive legal frameworks and awareness

National Land Policy 2023 Implementation advanced strengthening gender-responsive land governance	Gender-responsive planning Strengthening 22 institutions and local government systems
39 Policymakers strengthened capacities in gender-responsive planning, budgeting and monitoring	Blue Economy Gender Strategy Gender-responsive implementation strengthened in Zanzibar and related sectoral plans
6 National strategies and frameworks strengthened implementation of gender equality commitments	



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Looking forward

As JP RWEE Phase II approaches its endline, the programme is focusing on consolidating gains achieved through successful interventions, including GTAs, climate-smart agriculture, and value addition.

Greater emphasis will also be placed on nutrition-sensitive interventions and improving post-harvest management for key crops such as bananas and orange-fleshed sweet potatoes.

The Mid-term Review (MTR) underscored the need to strengthen programme effectiveness and efficiency by scaling proven approaches. In response, the 2026 Annual Work Plan prioritizes intensifying sustainability efforts,

promoting peer-to-peer learning, and expanding outreach to new wards and villages.

The MTR's emphasis on integrated GTAs has further informed the programme's direction, reinforcing their continued scaling alongside stronger synergies across interventions to maximize impact.

Building on these recommendations, the programme will intensify efforts to institutionalize key tools and approaches within government systems, strengthen local ownership through community structures, and further empower rural women's groups. Reinforcing gender-responsive systems at both national and subnational levels will remain a central priority.

Joanitha Kahangwa, Chamwino District

Joanitha Kahangwa, a widowed mother of five from Wilunze village in Chamwino District, is building both a business and a movement in her community. She runs a restaurant and catering service that supports her family, while also serving as a school board member, gender champion and community leader.

In a context where many women face limited economic opportunities and restrictive social norms, Joanitha chose to step forward.

She strengthened her skills in gender advocacy and business through engagement with JP RWEE-supported initiatives, such as RESPECT and SASA! Tools, and is now mentoring women and youth, helping them grow enterprises and participate more actively in community life.

"I have learned to be confident in what I am doing, though it is not an easy task. I now understand how important it is to help my fellow women fight gender-based violence and discrimination. I feel proud that I can raise awareness and people listen. I've become a female champion in my community, and now people come to my home seeking support."

Joanitha actively raises awareness on gender-based violence, supports survivors, and challenges harmful norms. Through her leadership, more women are starting businesses, joining village meetings and taking on leadership roles.

Her contributions were recognized in 2025 by the Chamwino District Council, acknowledging the change she continues to drive. Today, Joanitha is not only improving her own livelihood—she is opening pathways for other women to do the same.



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Joanitha Kahangwa (right side) receiving a certificate during International Women's Day celebrations, Chamwino District, 8 March 2025

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