

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



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THE PACIFIC ISLANDS 2026 FACTSHEET

Context

The Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE) in the Pacific Islands is being implemented across Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tonga, some of the most geographically dispersed and climate-vulnerable environments globally.

Rural women face persistent structural constraints, including remoteness, high transport costs, limited market access, weak service delivery, and exposure to climate shocks such as cyclones, drought, floods, and saltwater intrusion.

Livelihoods are shaped by smallholder farming, home gardening and informal market activities, often under conditions of limited infrastructure, water scarcity and marginal soils. These challenges are compounded by discriminatory gender norms, care responsibilities, and reduced access to productive resources and decision-making spaces.

Programme overview

The JP RWEE in the Pacific Islands 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).

The programme is aligned with national gender equality frameworks across participating countries.

In Fiji, it supports Women's Economic Empowerment National Action Plan (2025–2030). In Kiribati, it aligns with the National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development (2019–2022). In the Solomon Islands, it corresponds with the Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy (2021–2027), while in Tonga, it aligns with the Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (WEGET) Policy (2019–2025).

Overall, JP RWEE reinforces these national priorities by promoting women's economic empowerment and gender equality, particularly in rural contexts.

The programme operates across 144 communities in four countries:

- Fiji (Nadroga/Navosa and Ba);
- Kiribati (Tabiteuea North, Tabiteuea South, Onotoa, Nonouti);
- Solomon Islands (Guadalcanal, Malaita, Western Province);
- Tonga (Tongatapu, Ha'apai, E'ua).

JP RWEE supports rural women as smallholder farmers, home gardeners, market vendors and members of community groups. It focuses on four strategic outcomes:



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.

Implementation is adapted to highly diverse contexts—from remote seasonally flooded highland communities in Fiji to outer islands in Kiribati, where food production systems must respond to salinity, water scarcity and isolation.

Key results

In 2025, JP RWEE in the Pacific Islands reached 9,474 programme participants across 144 communities, that include 7,987 women and 1,487 men and approximately 45,640 household members.

Country-level direct reach includes:

- Fiji 2,131 beneficiaries (1,944 women, 187 men);
- Solomon Islands 3,225 (2,572 women, 653 men);
- Tonga 1,437 (1,259 women, 178 men); and
- Kiribati 2,681 (2,212 women, 469 men).

Fiji provides the strongest basis for assessing measured change because comparable baseline and midline data are available.

For Solomon Islands, Tonga and Kiribati, 2025 values provide an important quantitative reference point, but should be treated primarily as current achievement levels for future comparison rather than as evidence of change from a fully comparable pre-implementation baseline.

This does not weaken the findings; it strengthens their credibility by clarifying how the evidence should be used for programme management, donor accountability and endline assessment.

In 2025, the programme achieved the following results:

 Food Security & Nutrition Improved agricultural capacity and household resilience		 Income & Decent Work Increased economic autonomy and financial inclusion	
-12% Individual food insecurity in Fiji decreased	-29% Households moderate or severe food insecurity in Fiji reduced	+28% Farm income increase in Fiji	USD 4,195 Highest district-level farm income in Namataku Demonstrating strong market linkages through the Public-Private Partnership model
87% Households with diverse diets Dietary diversity increased from 78% to 87%	90% Households with adequate food consumption in Kiribati	USD 207 Income generated through cooperative sales in Kiribati	USD 1,948 Average farm income in Tonga Supported by strong agricultural performance and remittance-based livelihoods
1.8% Lowest food insecurity rate among the Pacific Islands programme countries recorded in Tonga	Home gardens improving nutrition Vegetables previously absent from diets are now being produced and consumed		
 Participation & Leadership Enhanced involvement in community decision-making		 Policy Environment More gender-responsive legal frameworks and awareness	
+49% Women's participation in governance structures in Fiji	8.9% Highest leadership conversion into governance roles rate Kiribati	66% Legal rights awareness in Fiji	70% Legal rights awareness in Kiribati and Solomon Islands
6 of 9 Empowerment domains improved Fiji's proWEAL analysis showed significant gains in autonomy, credit access and income control	+0.342 Increase in productive decision-making Women gained ability to influence productive and agricultural decisions	5 Regional legal frameworks influenced Gender-responsive legal and policy frameworks revised or implemented	1st National Gender Profile of Agriculture First comprehensive assessment of gender gaps in agricultural livelihoods in Kiribati
Economic empowerment driving social change Communities reported greater women's influence in household decisions, increased autonomy and reduced GBV linked to improved incomes and household wellbeing		Formal policy change achieved Advocacy by women market vendors in Fiji contributed to the extension of Sigatoka Town Council market hours, demonstrating influence on local government policy	



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Looking forward

As the JP RWEE Phase II is approaching its endline, the activities in the Pacific Islands will focus on consolidating and scaling existing results.

Lessons from 2025 highlight that results are strongest when production, group strengthening and market access are delivered in an integrated way, and when approaches are locally adapted and community-driven.

Sustainability will depend on strengthening women's groups, cooperatives and local institutions, which are emerging as the programme's most important legacy structures. The final phase will therefore focus on embedding these gains and ensuring continuity beyond programme closure. For example, in July 2026 the Pacific Islands teams is in exploratory discussions with the Fiji government for cost-sharing purchase of a solar powered refrigeration unit for the highland communities.

This will promote food security, minimise post-harvest loss. In addition to the obvious savings in eliminating dependence on diesel powered generators.

The Mid-term Review identified a persistent gap between programme achievements on the ground and their visibility in formal reporting, communications and global programme platforms. Strengthening documentation, case studies, photography, outcome-level evidence and timely communication should therefore be considered an integral part of programme delivery and accountability, rather than a secondary communications function.

Looking ahead, increasing climate variability and prolonged ENSO conditions are likely to place additional pressure on participating communities. The programme should therefore continue to strengthen climate resilience through climate-smart agriculture and sustainable practices, building on approaches already introduced, such as plastic mulching and selective drip irrigation in Tonga.

Mereseini Naola, Fiji

Mereseini Naola, a rural farmer from a remote highland community in Fiji, illustrates how practical support can translate into leadership and economic empowerment.

Living in an isolated area with high transport costs and limited market access, she faced persistent barriers to expanding her agricultural activities.

Through JP RWEE, she gained skills in entrepreneurship, financial literacy and market engagement. She has since diversified her production into higher-value crops and strengthened her household income.

Today, she serves as a district facilitator, supporting nearly 1,000 women across eight villages, helping them adopt new practices and access income opportunities. Her role reflects a broader programme outcome—women not only improving their livelihoods but also leading change within their communities.

Her experience shows how skills, collective organization and access to opportunities can strengthen both women's economic roles and their influence in community development.



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