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Investing in rural people



World Food
Programme



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



RWANDA 2026 FACTSHEET

Context

Rwanda's socio-economic context is shaped by its dependence on agriculture, which employs most rural households. Rising global prices for food, fuel, and fertilizer have deepened the cost-of-living crisis, reducing agricultural productivity, raising food costs, and pushing nearly half a million people below the poverty line. These challenges are most acute for rural women, who face overlapping economic and social vulnerabilities.

Women are disproportionately represented among subsistence farmers yet lack equal access to land, finance, and inputs, limiting their capacity to adapt to shocks. Fertilizer price hikes reduce yields, while higher transport costs inflate food prices, eroding household consumption. For women-headed households, that are more prone to poverty, these pressures further constrain income and diet diversity.

Beyond economic impacts, rural women carry a disproportionate share of unpaid care work and responsibility of securing food for their households. Discriminatory social norms often mean women eat last and least, worsening food insecurity and malnutrition.

Overall, the crisis intensifies rural women's exclusion from economic opportunities while heightening poverty

and inequality. Without targeted, gender-responsive interventions, these dynamics risk undermining Rwanda's broader development progress.

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.

The JP RWEE Phase II in Rwanda 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), the World Food Programme (WFP) and local partners.

Building on the achievements in Phase I (2014–2021) which laid the groundwork through strengthening women's producer groups, enhancing access to productive resources, and promoting gender equality, Phase II (2022–2027) is deepening impact by scaling tested strategies and adapting them to local realities in Nyamasheke, Ngoma, Kirehe, Gisagara and Nyaruguru districts to ensure progress toward food security and nutrition in Rwanda.

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 institutions;
-  A more gender-responsive policy environment.

Phase II is being implemented in two new districts, Gisagara and Nyamasheke across 11 sectors, and 120 villages, that have some of the highest poverty rates in the country.

Building on the targeting approach used in Phase I, the programme focuses on groups and communities with marginalized women who are often excluded from community support structures, including single and adolescent mothers, people living with HIV, survivors of gender-based violence, former sex workers, and rural women with disabilities, among others.

In Rwanda, the programme applies participatory and evidence-based methodologies, such as Farmer Field and Learning Schools, Village Savings and Loan Associations, nutrition awareness campaigns, and promotion of climate-smart technologies, ensuring interventions are inclusive, sustainable and context-specific.

These approaches align strongly with Rwanda's national priorities under the National Strategy for Transformation (NST2) and the Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation PSTA5, reinforcing women's role in agriculture, financial inclusion and leadership.

Key results

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

The programme is currently reaching 9,000 programme participants, including 7,343 women and 1,758 men. In addition, it is indirectly benefiting 36,000 people, including 29,372 women and 7,032 men.

The programme achieved the following results in 2025:

 Food Security & Nutrition Improved agricultural capacity and household resilience	
-19% Individual food insecurity decreased	-21% Household food insecurity reduced
35% Women achieving minimum dietary diversity (MDD-W) Dietary diversity more than doubled, increasing from 16% at baseline	29% More households spending less on food The share of households spending less than 65% of income on food doubled, reflecting improved financial resilience
3,833 Farmers adopting climate-smart practices 80% of the farmers were women, supported through Farmer Field Schools	2,798 Farmers improved post-harvest management Adoption of silos, tarpaulins and crates helped reduce losses and protect food quality
10% Poultry production supporting child nutrition A portion of programme-supported production was supplied directly to Early Childhood Development centres	Crop productivity increased Maize productivity rose from 0.7 to 7.0 t/ha; average beans yields increased from 0.4 to 3.0 t/ha; Irish potato yields rose from 0.5 to 8.7 t/ha

 Income & Decent Work Increased economic autonomy and financial inclusion	
+42% Farm income increased Average annual farm income grew from USD 78 to USD 111 in 2025	+110% Off-farm income increased Income from non-farm activities increased from USD 238 to USD 500
USD 216,543 Savings mobilised by programme participants	USD 167,656 Participants access in loans through savings groups and community mechanisms
720 New businesses established Entrepreneurship expanded across programme communities	79% Women-owned businesses 568 of the 720 new enterprises were owned and managed by women
4,020 Livestock acquired Households reinvested assets acquired from earnings/incomes, savings, and loans into productive assets	USD 9,720 Revenue generated by women-led poultry enterprises
1,025 Rural women gained access to time- and labour-saving technologies Reducing their workload and allowing time for productive and income-generating activities	

 Participation & Leadership Enhanced involvement in community decision-making	
57% Women actively participate in community structures Engagement in community structures increased from 18% in 2023 to over half of programme participants	99% Women hold leadership positions Women lead programme groups across almost all programme-supported structures
2,404 Participants engaged in community dialogues Community dialogues promoted women's economic participation and more inclusive governance	Positive shifts in social norms GALS, MenEngage and community dialogues contributed to improved joint decision-making, reduced household conflict and stronger support for sharing domestic responsibilities

 Policy Environment More gender-responsive legal frameworks and awareness	
10 Government stakeholders Participated in WE-IMPACT Fellowship strengthening their capacity to use pro-WEAL evidence for gender-transformative policymaking	54 Government officials Enhanced their knowledge in gender-responsive budgeting and planning
Two High-Level Policy Dialogues were conducted Focusing on Policy Pathways for Gender-Transformative Agri-food Systems in Rwanda and Catalysing Inclusive and Climate-Resilient Agri-Food Systems through Gender-Responsive Financing	National Gender Strategy revised Simplified and translated policy materials increased rural women's awareness of rights, opportunities and financial services



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Looking forward

The programme will continue advancing rural women's empowerment across food security, income generation, leadership, and policy engagement to ensure sustainable impact by the end of Phase II in 2027.

Key activities include providing climate-resilient inputs, irrigation systems and small livestock to improve nutrition and agricultural productivity, alongside training in post-harvest handling, climate-smart agriculture, and Farmer Field Schools.

Rural women will also gain access to markets, entrepreneurship training, and financial services, with support to transition groups into formal cooperatives and reduce unpaid care work through rainwater harvesting systems.

At the community level, initiatives will strengthen women's leadership, expand Men Engage approaches, and promote dialogues to shift harmful gender norms while raising awareness of women's rights through community platforms.

Policy-level actions will involve dialogue sessions, dissemination of strategies such as AFAWA, gender-responsive planning and budgeting workshops, and the use of tools like the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index to inform programming.

The programme will also contribute to Rwanda's climate commitments, and document success stories and good practices to ensure sustainability of the programme results. Collectively, these interventions aim to secure rural women's livelihoods, strengthen their voice and agency, and create an enabling policy environment for sustainable and equitable development.

Mukamana Esperance, Ngoma district

In Ngoma district, 45-year-old widow and mother of two, Mukamana Esperance, once faced an uncertain future after losing her husband, the family's sole provider. When the JP RWEE reached her community, it provided opportunities for skills development, savings and livelihood support.

Through savings groups and training at the Farmers' Field and Life School (IAMU), Esperance gained both financial support and a renewed sense of belonging. With 30,000 RWF and seven chickens, she began addressing malnutrition in her household while generating income through poultry farming. Gradually, her economic situation improved.

Eager to grow, she invested in two shares in her savings group. Through the programme, she also learned about a kitchen garden model and established one, strengthening her family's food security. Motivated by new skills, Esperance embraced the PFUMVUDZA farming method, attracted by its potential for higher yields with reduced labor and costs.

This marked a turning point, fueling her ambition to expand her agribusiness and one day own a car to further her enterprise. Her journey is not solitary. Together with her group, she engaged in a collective income-generating project, ensuring inclusiveness and shared progress.

Today, Mukamana Esperance stands as a symbol of resilience and transformation, proving how empowerment initiatives can unlock potential, restore dignity, and pave the way for a brighter future for rural women.



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