



## Accelerating Progress toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in Nepal: A Joint Pilot Contributing to the Implementation of the Agricultural Development Strategy

<b>Geographical Coverage:</b>	<b>Nepal (Tentative 30 village development committees in 3 districts)</b>
<b>Thematic Areas:</b>	<b>Women's Economic Empowerment</b>
<b>Project Title:</b>	<b>Accelerating Progress toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in Nepal: A Joint Pilot Contributing to Implementation of the Agricultural Development Strategy</b>
<b>Project Short Title:</b>	<b>RWEE Nepal</b>
<b>Expected Start Date:</b>	<b>1 January to June 2015</b>
<b>Duration:</b>	<b>6 months (overall project duration is 5 years, 2016-2020)</b>
<b>Implementing Partners:</b>	<b>UN WOMEN, FAO, WFP, IFAD</b>
<b>Over all budget:</b>	<b>135 000 USD</b>

### 1. Background Information

#### 1.1 Current Situation

In Nepal, an overwhelming majority of the population (83%) lives in rural areas and 43.13 per cent are women.<sup>1</sup> Rural Nepalese women are at the heart of the rural economy. From the economically active female population (age 10 and over), 72.8 per cent of females are engaged in agricultural work compared to men's 60.2 per cent.<sup>2</sup> They make major contributions to families, communities, and the country and economy as a whole. Women perform multiple roles as mothers and spouses/partners as well as farmers, workers, leaders, producers, entrepreneurs and service providers. They contribute around 65 per cent of the labour force in agricultural activities<sup>3</sup> and play a key role in food production, especially through subsistence farming. A study<sup>4</sup> that reviewed the impact of remittances on poverty reduction stated that women spend their income on family wellbeing contributing to food and nutrition security.

Improved food security prevents people, particularly women, from resorting to potentially dangerous coping strategies such as unregulated migration.<sup>5</sup> Only 19.71 per cent of households report ownership of land, house or both in the name of a female member.<sup>6</sup> Limited land ownership by women results in

<sup>1</sup> Government of Nepal: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012. National Population and Housing Census 2011. 83 percent counts those living in administratively designated VDCs as opposed to municipalities (where the urban population is situated).

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (2009), Selected Indicators of Nepalese Agriculture and Population

<sup>3</sup> FAO, 2011. The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11: Women in Agriculture; Closing the Gender Gap for Development. Rome: FAO.

<sup>4</sup> *International labour migration of Nepalese women: The impact of remittance on poverty reduction: Chandra Bhadra, 2007*

<sup>5</sup> WFP, 2012. Draft Country Programme Nepal 200319 (2013-2017).

<sup>6</sup> Government of Nepal, Central Bureau of Statistics 2012. National Population and Housing Census 2011. Implementation of the joint titling and tax rebate policies (ranging from 20-40 percent on land registration fees for women) have led to almost 12 percentage points increase in female land ownership between 2001 and 2011. However, this change has had a bigger impact in urban areas and a limited impact in rural areas, particularly the Terai. See also Existing Provisions and Initiatives

them not being listed as head of households. Moreover, women are less considered as farmers, and are rarely approached and consulted by agricultural extension service providers.<sup>7</sup> They also have limited access to markets, productive resources such as credit, water, seeds, fertilizer and technology.<sup>8</sup>

Food and nutrition security continues to be a challenge in Nepal. Fifteen per cent of the population is still considered food-insecure.<sup>9</sup> Increasing food prices is a major contributor to the high rates of inflation in the last few years.<sup>10</sup> According to Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2011, 36 per cent of rural women suffer from some degree of anaemia. It also states that 41 per cent of children under five years of age suffer from stunting and 11 per cent of under-five children are wasted. Rural women are further confronted by a range of gender-specific constraints. Women in rural areas are working 1.4 hours for every one hour worked by men.<sup>11</sup> Stereotypical and discriminatory gendered attitudes lead to socially imposed limitations to women's mobility, productivity and overall ability to reach their full potential.

The challenges facing rural women are further exacerbated by the combined impact of recent economic and financial crises, the volatile energy and food prices, and climate change. Globally, it is said that between 130 and 155 million people in the developing world fell into extreme poverty between 2007 and 2008, due to the food and fuel price hikes. Participation of women in decision-making is still low, and legal frameworks and policies often do not sufficiently address their needs. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which captures gender inequality in participation and decision-making power in political and economic affairs as well as in control over economic resources, is low in Nepal at 0.431 and 0.456 for the Mid West Region (MWR) and Far West Region (FWR) respectively, in comparison with 0.496 for the country as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.2 Problem or Opportunity Analysis

A distinct opportunity for collective action among women is taking place, especially in the rural areas of Nepal, due to a combination of factors that include heightened personal, economic and political insecurity, the absence of locally elected bodies and officials, and ultimately the lack of employment opportunities. The decade-long internal conflict, which had a negative impact on the country's economic development, led to an absence of men as they either joined the armed forces of the Maoist movement or migrated in search of better employment opportunities or to ensure their personal security. Women were thus left to fill the void at home<sup>13</sup> and in their communities which, combined with the Government's provision for a minimum of 33 per cent representation in national and local-level decision-making structures, provided an opening for women's participation and leadership. These changes have begun transforming lives and the wider socio-economic fabric of Nepal.

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towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment, Nepal: A Mapping Exercise.

<sup>7</sup> UN Women, 2013. Strengthening Gender Equality and Social Inclusive Provisions in Nepal's Agricultural Development Strategy.

<sup>8</sup> UN Women, 2012. Joint Programme on: Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women, National Consultative Workshop - Workshop Report.

<sup>9</sup> WFP, 2012. Draft Country Programme Nepal 200319 (2013-2017). Original Source quoted as: WFP and the Nepal Khadya Surakshya Anugaman Pranali (Nepal Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System – NeKSAP). 2011, Nepal food security bulletins.

<sup>10</sup> The Impact of Food Inflation on Poverty in Nepal Min Bahadur Shrestha, Ph.D and Shashi Kant Chaudhary, Nepal Rastra Bank Economic Review October 2012 [www.nrb.org.np/.../NRB\\_Economic\\_Review--Vol\\_24-2](http://www.nrb.org.np/.../NRB_Economic_Review--Vol_24-2)

<sup>11</sup> Making Care Visible Women's unpaid care work in Nepal, Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya Action Aid 2013

<sup>12</sup> UNDP Nepal (2009), *Nepal Human Development Report: State Transformation and Human Development*, available at [http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/national/asiathepacific/nepal/Nepal\\_NHDR\\_2009.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/national/asiathepacific/nepal/Nepal_NHDR_2009.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> According to the Population and Housing Census (2011), there was an increase in women-headed households from 19.6 per cent (2003/4) to 26.6 per cent (2009/10)

The Government of Nepal (GoN) has taken several steps in its commitment to enhance gender equality and empowerment of women. The GoN is signatory to various international conventions on gender equality and women's empowerment, including the CEDAW, the MDGs and the Beijing Platform of Action. It is in its final year of implementing its 20-year (1995-2015) **Agriculture Perspective Plan (APP)** that has focused on agriculture-led growth. The analysis of the impact of the APP on gender mainstreaming shows that the Government has made an attempt to highlight gender, especially in improving women's access to credit, training, research and extension programmes, etc. The analysis notes the capacity gaps of the concerned institutions and their failure to develop a clear gender strategy beyond working with and through women's groups, and their limited understanding of action needed beyond training for women. According to the analysis, women's participation in farmer groups is less than 40 per cent, and their roles in decision-making is low with only 23 per cent occupying positions in executive committees.

The **Agricultural Development Strategy (ADS)**, a 20-year strategy for agricultural development in Nepal, is committed to the inclusion of women, disadvantaged groups and geographically disadvantaged populations throughout the planning, implementation and monitoring of the strategy. The ADS includes a 10-year Plan of Action, which specifies the development of a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)<sup>14</sup> strategy. Development of the agricultural sector is a main concern within the local bodies' budgeting systems where 15 per cent of local budgets is allocated to agriculture. The Government started scaling up its efforts towards nutrition security in 2009, when it carried out the Nutrition Assessment and Gap Analysis (NAGA). The analysis recommended that Nepal create a "nutrition architecture" to promote multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration, i.e. nutrition-related interventions in health, agriculture, education, local development, gender, social welfare and finance sectors. While some progress has been achieved, chronic under-nutrition threatens to derail national social and economic development, and the achievement of the MDGs.

### 1.3 Government of Partner Country's Priorities and Plans

The Government's 13th Plan 2013-1016 aims to reduce both economic and human poverty, and to improve the living standards of people by engaging them in productive employment. The Plan aims to achieve gender equality as a cross-cutting theme, with an overall goal to achieve employment-centric, inclusive and equitable economic growth. A targeted women's economic empowerment campaign will be launched throughout the nation in order to enhance the access of different women's groups and communities in economic resources.<sup>15</sup>

The Government has endorsed the **Gender Equality Act** and adopted **gender-responsive budgeting** principles. Within the last fiscal year 21.7 per cent of government budget allocations have been classified as directly gender-responsive. The Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) has adopted a GESI policy, and allocated 35 per cent to targeted spending, out of which 10 per cent is specifically for women. The Government continues to implement a tax rebate policy and joint land ownership scheme to encourage women's land ownership.

The programme is in line with the GoN's **Development Cooperation Policy 2014** and its vision to build a self-reliant economy through an effective mobilisation of development cooperation and to help transform Nepal into a prosperous and democratic country. The Government has shown full

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<sup>14</sup> Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) is a concept that addresses unequal power relations between women and men and between different social groups. It focuses on the need for action to re-balance these power relations and ensure equal rights, opportunities and respect for all individuals regardless of their social identity.

<sup>15</sup> Government of Nepal: Budget speech of fiscal year 2014-15 - P.40 -

[http://www.mof.gov.np/uploads/cmsfiles/file/Budget%20Speech%20Final%20English\\_20140715100825.pdf](http://www.mof.gov.np/uploads/cmsfiles/file/Budget%20Speech%20Final%20English_20140715100825.pdf)

**ownership of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2013-2017<sup>16</sup>**, which under outcomes 1, 2 and 3 commits the country to supporting improved access to **basic essential social services and programmes** in an equitable manner, improved access to **economic opportunities** and **adequate social protection and ensuring self-confidence, respect and dignity of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups**. Despite the positive changes, gender inequality affects women’s potential in all sectors. While provisions are there, effective implementation remains an issue. There are concerns about effective and inclusive planning and budgeting, particularly at the Village Development Committee (VDC) and municipality level (most relevant for supporting the social and economic empowerment of marginalized groups).<sup>17</sup> An evaluation of the Local Governance Community Development Plan (LGCDP) states that VDCs and municipalities use the budget allocation for other purposes while claiming they do in fact serve women and disadvantaged groups. Gender budget audits, if used more widely and more effectively, could correct this.<sup>18</sup>

In its concluding observations, the Committee of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2011 has also expressed concern about the situation of rural women, and recommended that the GoN encourage women’s sustainable economic empowerment, including the promotion of women’s access to land, credit, markets and alternative employment opportunities, and the promotion of training on micro-enterprise development and management, as well as ensuring equal access to resources and nutritious food by eliminating discriminatory practices.<sup>19</sup>

#### **1.4 Rationale of the Project**

Recognising the existing challenges and opportunities amidst the changing landscape and centre staging rural women’s agency and rights, the four UN agencies – Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Food Programme (WFP) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) – have come together to deliver as one, to accelerate progress for the economic empowerment of rural women and to assist rural women to lift themselves out of poverty, while promoting the equitable and inclusive growth of Nepal. The four agencies are working together for the first time to expand on innovative models and building on their respective strengths: **FAO’s** policy assistance on agriculture and food security; **IFAD’s** experience on rural investment programmes; **WFP’s** food assistance and health and nutrition innovations; and **UN Women’s** leadership and technical expertise on women’s empowerment and gender responsive policies, and knowledge and expertise on foreign labour migration and reintegration.

The joint programme (JP) has been designed as a follow up on commitments of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on “the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas”, in November 2011, which reiterated a focus on rural women’s economic empowerment. It is in line with the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and its follow up processes, which reaffirm the role of rural women in sustainable development and climate change. The programme also takes forward the commitments of the Istanbul Plan of Action (IPoA) – in the development of which GoN played a leading role – that calls for focused intervention on agriculture

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<sup>16</sup> UNCT Nepal (2011), *United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2013-2017*, available at <http://un.org.np/reports/undaf-2013-2017>

<sup>17</sup> UN Women, 2013. Existing Provisions and Initiatives towards Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment, Nepal: A Mapping Exercise. A recent study commissioned by UN Women that assessed the local bodies investment in programmes related to women’s economic development and reduction of GBV found that such resources had been spent more on infrastructure development rather than income generation and skill development interventions.

<sup>18</sup> Focused Evaluation, Local Governance & Community Development Programme (LGCDP), Draft, 31 July 2012

<sup>19</sup> United Nations, 2011. Concluding Observations of the Committee of the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Nepal fourth and fifth report.

development with increased investments. Most poor people in the least developed countries depend on agriculture for living, and there have been calls for further resources for this area of MDG Goal 8.<sup>20</sup> The programme furthers the desired people-entered development policies requiring governments to ensure sustainable livelihoods and uphold human rights and gender equality, which civil society actors have noted the IPoA falls short of addressing.

The design of the programme has been informed by a consultative process at the national level, which included a national consultative workshop and mapping study. The consultative workshop was attended by over a hundred participants, including representatives from Ministry of Agricultural Development (MoAD) and other line ministries, the National Planning Commission (NPC), the UN, Local Development Officers (LDO), Women and Children Development Officers (WCDO), women farmers from mountain, hill, Tarai regions, and other concerned stakeholders.<sup>21</sup> The mapping study highlighted a range of good practices that the programme can build on. It also identified gaps in the on-going programmes and processes, and potential broad areas of synergies for the programme to address, also contributing to the 'Strengthening Gender Equality and Social Inclusive Provisions in Nepal's Agricultural Development Strategy' report<sup>22</sup> prepared by UN Women.

The programme will consist of two phases: the **preparatory phase** of 6 months in 2015 and the **implementation phase** of five years from 2016-2020, which includes an inception stage. The preparatory phase of the programme will be conducted with the financial support of the Government of Norway in 2015. In this phase the management modality, programme implementation details, including selection of districts and VDCs will be finalised in close collaboration with MOAD. Joint visits by the MoAD, other sectoral ministries and UN agencies involved in the programme will be conducted to the proposed districts mainly to facilitate the coordination mechanism and to agree on the district and VDC selection based on the criteria that will be developed later.

Identification of the districts and VDCs will be done through a **cluster approach** to facilitate effective and coordinated implementation and other operational management. **The inception phase of the implementation of the programme will include capacity assessments of partners and fine-tuning of the project activities in consultation with the key stakeholders. It will develop a monitoring and evaluation framework while developing an information management system to support effective implementation. Baseline data will be collected in the initial stage of the implementation phase. The revised programme document will be endorsed by the Steering Committee at the end of the inception phase<sup>23</sup>.**

A **Performance Monitoring Framework (PMF)** will comprise of a completed log-frame with targets and indicators for all activities, and a monitoring framework for each of the selected districts during the inception stage of the programme's implementation phase. The PMF will be aligned with the National Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines (2013).

## 2. Stakeholder Analysis

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.spotlightnepal.com/News/Article/Linking-Istanbul-Plan-of-Action>

<sup>21</sup> Local Development Officers, Women Development Officers, experts, women farmers and leaders from various rural districts across the Mountain, Hill and Terai regions of the country

<sup>22</sup> TA 7762-NEP Preparation of the Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS). Prepared for the Government of Nepal with the support of ADB, IFAD, EU, FAO, SDC, JICA, USAID, DANIDA, WFP, World Bank, DfiD, AusAID and UN Women. June 2013

<sup>23</sup> For the full implementation of the pilot programme a proposal has been submitted to the KOICA covering the period of 2016-2020.

## 2.1 Beneficiaries

The JP is in line with the UNDAF for 2013-2017. The programme potentially cuts across many of the vulnerable 'client groups' identified in the UNDAF, including women of reproductive age; women subject to sexual abuse and exploitation; Dalits; undernourished children; rural landless and land-poor; migrant workers and their families; the illiterate; conflict-affected women; people from the lowest performing districts; people from areas especially vulnerable to climate change; and other disadvantaged women and girls. The exact number and geographical location of the beneficiaries will be determined as part of the programme's preparatory phase.

## 2.2 Programme Implementing Organization of Partner's Country

The **lead agency to execute the programme will be the MoAD**, in partnership with UN Women, IFAD, FAO and WFP and other government and non-government stakeholders. As guided by MoAD, the programme will be reflected in the national budgetary system of the GoN as 'technical assistance' in line with the Government's Development Cooperation Policy 2014.

The programme will be implemented in **three districts of the Eastern and Central Regions (Tarai and hill), adopting a cluster approach**. The district selection criteria will take into account vulnerability indicators identified in the UNDAF (2013-2017).

The MoAD, as the nodal ministry, will provide overall support and guidance for the smooth implementation of the programme. It will support and facilitate the preparatory phase work to finalize the programme implementation modality, selection of programme districts and beneficiaries. The programme will also collaborate with other government agencies, civil society, women's and farmers' groups for the implementation of the programme activities.

A **Programme Steering Committee (PSC)** will be established at MoAD. The PSC will be chaired by the Secretary of MoAD and the Joint Secretaries of NPC, MoAD, MoWCSW, MoF, MoFALD, and MoLE, MoHP, the Director General (DG) of the Department of Agriculture (DOA), DG of the District Livestock Office, and a representative from a rural women's group will be the members of the PSC. Also the Heads of Agencies (HoAs) of the four agencies will be members of the committee. A Programme Coordinator will be nominated by MoAD who will also be a member of the PSC. The Programme Coordinator will have the overall responsibility to facilitate the coordination with the government machinery for the smooth implementation of the JP. The Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Section under the Food Security and Environment Division of MoAD will act as the programme secretariat at the MoAD.

A **Technical Working Group (TWG)** will be established to provide technical guidance to the programme implementation. UN Women as the lead agency will convene the meetings of the group.

At the **district level**, overall coordination and guidance for the implementation of the programme will be provided by the District Agriculture Development Committee (DADC), chaired by the LDO. District line offices, such as DADO, Department of Livestock Services (DLSO), WCDO and District Public Health Office (DPHO), represented in DADC, will be responsible for approving work plans, and providing oversight of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the district level interventions. Other line agencies represented at DADC as well as representatives of rural women's groups will be encouraged to coordinate and provide complementary support to the implementation of the specific programme components/activities.

**UN Women** will take the lead role and will be the **Administrative Agency**. It will have the overall responsibility of managing and coordinating the programme and funds. The programme will thus be supported by the Economic Empowerment Unit of UN Women that will be providing overall supervision, reporting, monitoring of the programme, including management of funds. It will be responsible for coordinating with the UN Women headquarters and all UN partner agencies and to chair and host the review meetings and the periodic workshops. It will provide the gender-related expertise required for the programme and will supervise the PSC. UN Women will ensure progress reporting as per its internal requirements, and will also develop donor reports as required.

### 3. Goal and Outcomes (for 5 year programme)

The **goal** of the programme is to secure rural women’s livelihoods and rights ensuring sustainable development in the post conflict context of Nepal. To achieve this goal, four outcome areas have been provisionally identified based on context specific issues and potentials, and within the framework of the global programme. Within each outcome area, a number of outputs and indicative activities have been formulated that build specifically on identified needs and opportunities.

- **Outcome 1** - Rural Nepalese women and their families have improved food and nutrition security
- **Outcome 2** - Rural women have increased income to secure their livelihoods
- **Outcome 3** - Rural women’s representation and leadership is strengthened in local communities for gender responsive governance
- **Outcome 4** – A gender responsive policy environment is secured for the economic empowerment of Nepalese rural women

The preparatory phase of RWEE Nepal will support the design and launch the 5-year evidence-based RWEE targeting the economic and social empowerment of rural women in Nepal based on the consolidation of research, evidence-based practices and lessons learned from the field, and ownership from critical, local, national and regional stakeholders.

### 4. Activities for Preparatory Phase of RWEE Nepal

Activity Description	Place of implementation	Expected impact or outcome	Number of beneficiaries (women/ men)	Implementing partners	Starting date	Ending date	Activity cost in USD
Finalise programme operational modality with Government	National	Clarity on the operational modality for inclusion in the final draft of the programme document		Ministry of Agricultural Development (MOAD)/4 UN JPs	January 2015	March 2015	Staff time
Identify geographical coverage for	Tentatively 3 districts	Finalisation of criteria for selection of districts and Village Development		MOAD and 4 UN JPs	January 2015	March 2015	Staff time

implementation <sup>24</sup>	Committees (VDCs)						
<b>Finalise TOR for situation analysis and baseline study</b>	National / District	Identification of partners (national/local/target groups / training institutes, etc.		MOAD and 4 UN JPs	February 2015	March 2015	Staff time
<b>Develop guidelines/checklist for the gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) strategy of the national Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS) – based on consultations with women’s groups, women farmers, UN Women Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG)</b>	National / District	Checklist for GESI ADS strategy available		Technical agency	February 2015	June 2015	10000
<b>Support MOAD to institutionalise monitoring gender responsiveness in ADS implementation (GESI unit)</b>	National / District	Recommendations to strengthen the gender architecture of MOAD	MOAD and 5 regional offices	MOAD, 4 UN and Technical agency	February 2015	May 2015	5000
<b>Conduct situation analysis and develop baselines</b>	National / District	Better understanding of the context in the project district	3 districts (TBC post discussion with the Govt)	Technical agency	March 2015	May 2015	45000
<b>Support series of consultations</b>	National/ District	Generate ownership for the programme	200 women and men	MOAD/4 UN JPs	March 2015	June 2015	40000

<sup>24</sup> The programme tentatively aims to reach out to about 50,000 households. Nepal according to the recent Population and Housing Census (2011) has 5,400,000 households of which 3, 500,000 are involved in agriculture



and inception workshops (one national workshop and five district consultations)							
Staff cost salary							35,000
<b>TOTAL</b>							<b>135,000</b>

## 5. Modality of Activities

All activities presented above will be implemented by the respective UN agencies through collaborating partners from the Nepal Government, namely the Ministry of Agricultural Development, and civil society organizations.

## 6. Outputs

Expected outputs from the 6-month preparatory phase of RWEE Nepal include:

- Programme management and operational modality finalized
- Criteria for geographical coverage for implementation developed and project location finalised
- Guidelines/checklist developed for the gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) strategy of the Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS)
- Recommendations to track gender responsive monitoring of the ADS by MoAD available
- Situation analysis conducted and baseline data available

## 7. Budget for Preparatory Phase activities<sup>25</sup>

PROGRAMME BUDGET (amount requested at this time)	
CATEGORY	COST IN USD
1. Staff and other personal costs	35,000
2. Supplies, commodities, materials	
3. Equipment, vehicles and furniture including depreciation	3000
4. Contractual services	78169
5. Travel	10000
6. Transfers and Grant Counterparts	
7. General operating and other direct costs	
Total Programme Costs	<b>126,169</b>
8. Indirect Support Costs (cannot exceed 7%)	8831
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>135,000</b>

<sup>25</sup> UN Women on behalf of all 4 agencies will implement the 6 months preparatory phase activities.

## 8. Contacts

UN Women

Ziad Sheikh , Representative, UN Women Nepal

Email: [ziad.sheikh@unwomen.org](mailto:ziad.sheikh@unwomen.org)

Tel: +977 1 4255110

FAO

Somsak Pipoppinyo, Country Representative, FAO Nepal

Email: [somsak.pipoppinyo@fao.org](mailto:somsak.pipoppinyo@fao.org)

Tel: +977-1-5523200

IFAD

Lakshmi Moola, Country Programme Manager IFAD, Nepal

Email: [l.moola@ifad.org](mailto:l.moola@ifad.org)

Tel: +39 0654592359

WFP

Nicole Menage, Country Director, WFP Nepal

Email: [nicole.menage@wfp.org](mailto:nicole.menage@wfp.org)

Tel: +977-1-5260607

### Names and signatures of participating UN organizations

  
(On behalf of UN WOMEN)

Name: Ziad Sheikh  
Title: Representative  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

  
(On behalf of FAO)

Name: Somsak Pipoppinyo  
Title: Representative in Nepal &  
Bhutan  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

  
(On behalf of IFAD)

Name: Lakshmi Moola  
Title: Country Programme Manager  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

  
(On behalf of WFP)

Name: Nicole MENAGE  
Title: Country Director  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_