

JOINT PROGRAMME ON:  
Accelerating Progress towards the  
Economic Empowerment of Rural Women



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## **RWEE- Rural Women Economic Empowerment Joint Program**

“Accelerating progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women”

Progressive Report: Submitted to Government of Norway

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## I. General Background

### RWEE- Rural Women Economic Empowerment Programme in Ethiopia; “Accelerating progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women”

RWEE is a 5 year results oriented collaborative global programme initiated in 2012 at global level by UNWOMEN, FAO, IFAD and WFP to promote the economic empowerment of rural women. It has an overarching goal of securing rural women’s livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development and the post MDGs. It is being implemented in Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda and Ethiopia. RWEE Joint Programme in Ethiopia was developed by UN Women, IFAD, WFP and FAO, as an integral part of the existing Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE JP) which is being implemented by the Government of Ethiopia and UN agencies. The programme was developed to respond to challenges faced by poor rural women in agrarian and pastoral communities in Afar and Oromia Regions of Ethiopia. It aims to accelerate their economic empowerment and to secure their livelihoods and rights as defined by Ethiopia’s Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) and in contributing to the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The JP RWEE aims at achieving four interrelated outcomes:

**Outcome 1. Rural women improve their food security and nutrition,**

**Outcome 2. Rural women increase their income to sustain their livelihoods,**

**Outcome 3. Rural women strengthen their voice in decisions that affect their lives,**

**Outcome 4. Gender responsive policy and institutional environment for women's economic empowerment.**

The programme targets 2,000 smallholder rural women farmers and pastoralists in the Regional States of Afar and Oromia, targeting 4 Woredas (districts) and 8 Kebeles (the lowest administrative units). Indirectly, the different interventions brought about by the RWEE JP are expected to influence the livelihoods of an additional 20,000 household members and communities living in the targeted Woredas. The JP is implemented in a partnership where both federal and regional government organizations are the key stakeholders for the RWEE under the leadership of Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCYA) and Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED). In addition, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoA) Agriculture Transformation Agency (ATA), Federal Micro and Small Enterprise Development Agency (FeMSEDA), and Federal Cooperative Agency (FCA), are among the major stakeholders at federal level providing policy level support to improve the enabling environment for rural agrarian and pastoralist women,

At regional level, Bureau of Finance and Economic Development (BoFEDs); Bureaus of Women and Children Affairs (BoWCYAs); Regional Bureaus of Agriculture and Rural Development (BoA); Regional Micro and Small Enterprise Development Agency (ReMSEDAs) and Cooperative Promotion Office in Afar and Oromia are the primary stakeholders with whom the program is directly implemented. The project also promotes private public partnerships with Saving and Credit Cooperatives and Unions (SACCOs); Rural Saving and Credit Cooperatives and Unions (RUSACCOs); and Regional and Federal Women Entrepreneurs Associations In addition, the JP aims to work with strong Community Based Organizations for a diversified approach, strengthened partnerships as well as experience sharing for the achievement of better results.

The RWEE JP has secured a total of 3.06 million USD as a result of the positive response from Donors. The funding comprises of 1.5 million USD from the Spanish Government (SDG Fund), 245,482 USD from the Government of Norway, 1,106,102 USD from Government of Sweden and 211,000 USD contribution from the participating UN Agencies.

## **II. Project Achievements/Progress**

**The Ethiopia RWEE JP has witnessed significant milestones in 2014 including the official launch and the holding of the 1<sup>st</sup> national stakeholders planning workshop:**

### **National Launch/Workshop**

The RWEE - Rural Women Economic Empowerment Programme was nationally launched in Ethiopia on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in a colorful event held at the Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa in the presence of the stakeholders.

The main purpose of this launching ceremony organized by UN Women and the three Rome Based Agencies (FAO, IFAD, and WFP) was to lay ground for the commencement of the Joint Programme and to introduce the key programme objectives to stakeholders who shall be engaged in implementation. Over two hundred guest included representatives from relevant sector ministries, female and male representatives of the target communities, the donor community, potential donors and the media as well as other UN agencies and CSO's. The guests were provided with folders containing brochures, promotional materials and documentation of RWEE JP to raise awareness on the objectives of the programme, create interest and allow the participants to appropriately familiarize themselves with the programme.

The Launching ceremony was presided by Mr. Eugene Owusu, the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Ethiopia, Mrs. Letty Chiwara the UN Women Representative to Ethiopia, Africa Union (AU) and Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and Her Excellency, Mrs. Zenebu Tadesse, Minister of Women, Children and Youth Affairs.



Figure 1: Her Excellency Mrs. Zenebu Tadesse (on the right), Mrs. Letty Chiwara, Mr. Eugene Owusu) Giving Remarks at the RWEE Launching Workshop. Photo by Ephrem Tesfaye, MOWCYA

In the respective keynote speeches, Her Excellency Mrs. Zenebu demonstrated her enthusiasm for RWEE, articulated the need to empower marginalized rural women in Ethiopia and made a call to all and in particular men champions to support the programme. Mrs. Zenebu expressed the need for change at the individual, community and institutional levels to challenge and eradicate norms, attitudes and practices that undermine gender equality. The inherent synergies between the participating UN Agencies; UN Women, IFAD, FAO and WFP, were noted to be critical for the project to achieve its objectives and to result into a real and long-lasting mechanism which will empower rural women and men to better their lives and those of their future generations.

Mrs. Letty Chiwara took the opportunity to express her gratitude to the Embassies and Governments of Spain, Sweden and Norway who have generously provided funding to the project and advocated for further resource mobilization. She conveyed the message that “Research after research has shown that rural women are central to the development of rural communities and national economies: they account for a significant proportion of the agricultural labor force, play a key role in food production, especially in subsistence farming and perform most of the unpaid care work in rural areas.”

Mr. Eugene Owusu, the UN Resident Coordinator in Ethiopia attested to the fruitful benefits of UN agencies working together, utilizing their unique and mutually supportive comparative advantages and track record to delivering as one quality results. Mr. Owusu addressed the subject of gender gaps in Ethiopia as he advocated, “Addressing the gender gap is not simply a matter of fairness but a decision based on sound economics. According to a recent study by UNDP’s Regional Bureau for Africa the gender gap is costing Africa USD 60 billion in potential outputs each year. This year’s World Economic Forum report on the gender gap ranked Ethiopia

127 out of 140 countries in terms of gender equality. This is an unacceptable ranking for a country that is pushing forward such an ambitious development agenda and that has put gender equality and equity at the center of its national development strategy. As we move towards the Sustainable Development Goals, we must step up our efforts to delivering smart solutions that will help Ethiopia close the gender gap”. Mr. Eugene Owusu was proud to express that the Ethiopia UN Country Team’s slogan for their collective advocacy work in 2015 is: “Empower a woman; Empower a Nation”. He affirmed that “When you educate a woman, you educate a community; when you empower a woman you, empower a nation.”

With the objective of familiarizing the stakeholders in the event with the RWEE project in general and its focuses in Ethiopia, Mrs. Yelfigne Abegaz, UN Women National Program Coordinator in Ethiopia, gave a comprehensive power point presentation. The presentation covered the global context of RWEE, its alignment to the national priorities and UNDAF, the national context, RWEE’s objectives, purposes, result areas, the level of interventions and the management arrangement.



Figure 2 Mrs. Yelfigne Abegaz, Presenting about REWEE: Photo by Ephrem Tesfaye, MOWCYA



Figure 3 Photo of Munit Misfane and representative of government and community from target areas (Afar and Oromia)-left to right: Photo by Ephrem Tesfaye., MOWCYA

In their testimonies, two rural women from Oromia and Afar shared their personal experiences, the hardships, the gratitude they have for similar programmes and the great anticipation they have to the commencement of the RWEE JP. They emphasized the potential the rural women have and looked forward to implementation of the RWEE in Ethiopia.

The elder and community representative from Oromia stated that:

*“Much work has been made to transform perceptions on women in the community. To stop undermining women and violence or harmful practices is important because only when they are safe and healthy can they be as productive as their potential thus we are ready to mobilize the community to make the best of the investments into our women and the community”*

### **III. Annual Planning Workshop**

As a priority implementation action, a planning workshop was conducted for the target regions of Oromia and Afar and federal representatives in December 2014.

The purpose of the planning workshop was to create common understanding about the programme among all key implementing partners and also to agree upon annual work plans (indicative activities) for 2015 and 2016. Specific objectives include:

- 1) To ensure participatory planning and ownership to the project,
- 2) To enrich the planning processes and to make informed decisions on priorities of the rural poor women in two regions,
- 3) To initiate the kick start of the implementation process and to establish a roadmap for strengthened interventions,
- 4) To enhance cross learning between the agencies and implementing partners

The planning workshop for Oromia state was held in Adama, with over 60 representatives from Government Organizations, Non-Government Organizations and women community representatives. In general, the participants including representatives from different sectorial government bodies at federal, regional level and Woreda levels BOFED, BOWCYA, targeted woredas, Bureau Of Agriculture, project coordinators, NGOs, regions Cooperative Promotion Bureau, the federal level government bodies MoFED, MoWCYA, women community representatives and technical working group members from each agencies.

The planning workshop was opened by Her Excellency, Mrs. Zenebu Tadesse, Minister of Women, Youth and Children Affairs, Ms. Funmi Balogun, Deputy Country Representative, UN

Women Ethiopia and Mrs. Seida Kedir, Head of the Oromia Bureau of Women, Children and Youth Affairs.



*Figure Oromia RWEE Annual Planning workshop: Participants and Mrs. Seida Kedir, Head BOWCYA: Photo Ephrem Tesfaye*

During the opening remarks W/ro Seida Kedir said that “We are gathered here today, to discuss and decide the implementation process and every step of the RWEE JP until we reach a single rural woman”. For RWEE JP, we have chosen in the region of Oromia, three zones and once we see results in these areas, the programme will be scaled up.

Three zones has been chosen in Oromia: East Showa, West Arsi and North Showa. Scaling up of the programme to other zones in Oromia and other Regions in Ethiopia will be done based on the results from the three priority zones.

1. The annual planning workshop for Afar was conducted immediately after that of Oromia. The planning workshop was interactive, enabling rural women to have their say alongside with other implementing partners and key stakeholders. The following methodologies were employed to ensure the active participation by all. Presentations on the RWEE Programme to create a shared understanding between all stakeholders on the objectives, nature, funding situation and joint venture of the program
2. Plenary discussions and group works among the technical working groups and people from regional offices on the key activities.
3. Development of a workable action plan by participants with defined roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder.

## **Key Achievements:**

### **1. *Increased awareness on and support by all stakeholders to facilitate implementation of the program in the target regions created:***

- The planning workshop was attended by high level government Minister and Regional Bureau heads, and UN agency officials. Government commitments towards economic empowerment of rural women were articulated and the RWEE program appreciated for its contributions towards this effort in the piloted regions of Oromia and Afar. Expected measurable results of RWEE in the selected regions will facilitate up scaling of the programme at national level.
- The programme was introduced to participants with a detailed articulation of programme outcomes, joint programme partnering agencies comparative advantage in each outcome the key donors and the funding status.
- The presentation was made in local language for participant efficient grasping of the programme.
- It clarified existing issues as well as the objectives and the approach of the project. There was broad consensus from participants and government counterparts on the importance of the programme and this was reflected in the importance placed on the foreseeing programme scale up at national level.

### **2. *Detail discussion on AWP for year (2015-2016):***

- Detailed discussions were held on priorities and activities relevant to each region.
  - ✓ Participants came up with outputs, implementation process and modalities with due emphasis as well as any gaps or hitches seen in other similar projects and to ensure sustainable economic empowerment
  - ✓ Defined roles and responsibilities among counterparts Draft implementation schedule of the plan has been set.

### **3. *Agreed upon implementation modalities***

- Relevant guidelines to be developed and translated in local language of both regions and shared to all.
  - ✓ Programme Implementation Manual (PIM)
  - ✓ Guidelines on Financial reporting
  - ✓ Guidelines on Revolving funds and what it entails
  - ✓ Guidelines on M&E

- Training/ sensitization workshop to be held
  - ✓ Particularly on the Program Implementation Manual and financial reporting.
- Steering committee leading on all other responsible body need to comprise of: MSE, MOFED and MOWCYA.

#### **IV. Preparatory meetings and outcomes**

In the lead up to the official launch and the planning workshops, several key meetings were held from the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014 by RWEE partners at the RWEE TWG level, at the GEWE TWG level, HoA level and with the Government of Ethiopia specifically the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) and Ministry of Women Children Affairs (MoWCYA). The TWG held regular meetings to review progress on the development of key programme documents; set action points to agree on the way forward and to prepare updates for the PMC on the progress of RWEE. Key issues discussed and agreed upon included:

- RWEE JP had merged with the existing Ethiopia GEWE UN Flagship JP: it has been agreed that the GEWE's Joint Programme Managing Committee (PMC) composed of the participating UN agencies and the Ministry of Women Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCYA) will act as the RWEE National Steering Committee. MoFED as the designated Development coordinating Ministry of the GoE was proposed to be part of the PMC as well as the GEWE - TWG. The Minister of WCYA who chairs the PMC will represent Ethiopia in the Inter Agency Steering Committee at global level (assuming the ISC meetings will not require frequent travel).
- The RWEE partners agreed on the need to ensure the unique nature of the RWEE in the Ethiopian context. As such the RWEE Agencies will retain a TWG that shall meet regularly to keep abreast with implementation as well as incubate ideas/articulate on issues that shall influence the broader GEWE TWG on matters specific/related to the RWEE.
- The TWG agreed to start implementation for the first phase of the RWEE JP in two regions in Ethiopia, Oromia and Afar and four Kebeles (one in Afar and three in Oromia). Factors influencing the selection of the regions included the possibility to demonstrate quick gains in the first two years, the capacity of the region/districts to uptake the JP, easy access and to select regions that are currently not benefiting from any other joint initiatives through Rome based agencies.
- With the expectation that the RWEE will have impact and deliver results with this initial contribution, the RWEE TWG proposed that this initial funding envelop should build on

agencies experiences and focus on regions/districts where agencies have a comparative advantage rather than start from scratch in new areas as had been suggested by MoWCYA.

- The TWG discussed about resource mobilization strategies and agreed on core issues to be included in the proposals submitted to Norway, Sweden and SDG-F.
- The TWG agreed on detailed activities that the Country Team will implement within 2015. These activities were approved at country level as part of the RWEE joint strategy.
- The TWG outlined roles and responsibilities to organize and coordinate the planning workshops. Accordingly, FAO organised and coordinated the planning workshop and allotted the necessary budget, while all TWG members took different responsibilities to facilitate the workshop, created a shared understanding on the overall objectives of RWEE by jointly preparing a draft annual work plan for the two years period (2015-2016).
- The TWG finalized draft RWEE presentations prepared for different forums including concept notes and road maps of RWEE.

## Challenges

**The planning process for RWEE is taking a long period and holding back the agencies from implementation.**

This is due to:

- The country context being different from other JP countries.
- Following the two regional workshops and the thoroughly discussed indicative activities, the regional, woreda and community representatives came up with comments which necessitated changes to some of the activities. Thus, the agencies had to rework on the activities to accommodate them to fit to the needs of the target communities and women before proceeding with implementation.

## Way forward

1. Conduct baseline survey and market assessment against which TORs have been developed shared.
2. Update the project's M&E Framework (Performance Monitoring Framework (PMF).
3. Recruit and deploy key staff for the programme.
4. Facilitate the release of funds already secured from Spanish SDG and Government of Sweden.

5. Follow-up with implementing partners to finalize their AWP based on the budget ceiling and activities as agreed up during the planning workshop.

Ensure that budgets are released to Implementing Partners and support implementation as per the plan.