



Acceleration of Rural Women's Economic Empowerment in KYRGYZSTAN

ANNUAL PROGRAMME NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT REPORTING PERIOD: 1 OCTOBER – 31 DECEMBER 2014

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Programme Title & Project Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Title: Acceleration of Rural Women's Economic Empowerment in Kyrgyzstan Programme Number (if applicable) 00093704 MPTF Office Project Reference Number: <p style="text-align: center;">Participating Organization(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN Women UN FAO UN WFP <p style="text-align: center;">Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</p> <p>Total approved budget as per project document: USD 245,482 MPTF /JP Contribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN Women: USD 97,501 UN FAO: USD 74,900 UN WFP: USD 73,081 <p>Agency Contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A <p>Government Contribution N/A</p> <p>Other Contributions (donors) N/A</p> <p>TOTAL: USD 245,482</p> <p>Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.</p> <p>Assessment/Review - if applicable <i>please attach</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Date: <i>dd.mm.yyyy</i></p> <p>Mid-Term Evaluation Report – if applicable <i>please attach</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Date: <i>dd.mm.yyyy</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results</p> <p>(if applicable) Country/Region KYRGYZ REPUBLIC</p> <p>Priority area/ strategic results UNDAF Kyrgyzstan Pillar 2&3 UN Women: Women's Economic Empowerment</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Implementing Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGO Community Development Alliance TES Centre Other NGOs to be selected <p style="text-align: center;">Programme Duration</p> <p>Overall Duration <i>12 months</i></p> <p>Start Date: 01.10.2014</p> <p>Original End Date: 30.09.2015</p> <p>Current End date</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report Submitted By</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Zhypargul Turmamatova Title: ARWEE Programme Manager Participating Organization (Lead): UN Women Email address: zhypargul.turmamatova@unwomen.org |
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Acceleration of Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (ARWEE) programme implemented jointly with UN Women, FAO, IFAD and WFP has been launched in the Kyrgyz Republic as part of a 5-year global joint initiative in October 2012. Due to challenges in mobilization of resources for the programme faced for about two years in late 2013 three partner agencies, namely UN Women, FAO and WFP, have decided to start some pilot activities with own resources. As a result during 2014 a total of 231 vulnerable group members, including 212 women, mobilized in 36 self-help groups in two selected provinces of the Kyrgyz Republic have received assistance to engage in productive agricultural activity and thus improve their livelihoods and food security.

Funding from the MPTF has been received in late October 2014 in support of the ongoing programme. In order to further develop marketing and planning skills of programme beneficiaries and enable their effective participation in the market of agricultural produce during November-December 2014 WFP has conducted value chain development trainings, which included sessions on marketing, rapid market assessment, business and financial planning. Considering the vulnerable background of beneficiaries, often forcing them to refrain from training activities in favour of their productive activities (time poverty) ARWEE beneficiaries are offered food assistance for their participation in training through Food for Training component. All 231 beneficiaries have received vitamin enriched food items improving the quality and quantity of nutrition in their families.

In 2015 the programme will capitalize on the women's economic self-sufficiency and practical skills of joint action and business planning in order to increase rural women's meaningful participation in the local decision-making and development planning processes, which influence their lives, to capacitate local self-authorities in inclusive and gender responsive planning, and to support national level policy environment promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. ARWEE partners have continued elaborating programme design for the additional mobilization of resources through MPTF. The programme document is aligned with the current activities and additional resources are expected to upscale the pilot efforts and successes. This programme in the longer term is aimed at supporting secure and resilient livelihoods, improved quality of life of rural women leading to decreased maternal and child mortality, and creating gender responsive policy environment in the country.

I. Purpose

As part of a global joint initiative the Acceleration of Rural Women's Economic Empowerment programme focuses on rural women's economic empowerment in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Together, this partnership between UN Women, FAO, IFAD and WFP is expected to generate synergies that capitalize on each agency's mandate, comparative advantage and institutional strength to generate more lasting and wider scale results. The partnership of three UN agencies, each having a specialized mandate is premised on a successful support model provided by UN Women, FAO and WFP during their joint Delivering as One programme. This proved to be effective and mutually reinforcing. Group solidarity and membership discipline in self-help groups mobilized by UN Women ensured accurate use of seeds, fertilizers, and food, as well as consistent and systematic application of new knowledge on agricultural technologies and food security. Following this model, the programme will utilize the comparative advantages of four agencies: FAO's policy assistance on agriculture and food security, value chain training and normative work; WFP's food assistance innovations; and UN Women's technical expertise on women's economic empowerment and its mandate to promote accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment.

ARWEE aims to promote rural women's economic empowerment in the Kyrgyz Republic through securing rural women's livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development and the post-MDGs agenda. Programme is designed around the following three outcome areas: (i) increased income opportunities and food security for rural women; (ii) enhanced leadership and participation of rural women in decision-making processes at the local and national levels; and (iii) a more gender responsive policy environment in the country. The agencies aim to provide a harmonized, political, and institutional framework for complex programme interventions aiming at overcoming deep-rooted inequalities in rural areas. The current programme will be premised on the experience of a successful partnership between UN Women, FAO and WFP from previous joint projects. Efforts will be made to build support for the programme within the UN country teams and to link it with existing relevant joint programmes.

The programme is in line with national priorities defined in the National Strategy on Sustainable Development (NSSD), Strategy on Agricultural Development (SAD) and the National Strategy on Gender Equality with a special focus on improving the status of rural women, poverty reduction and sustainable agricultural development.

The ARWEE programme objectives are also aligned with UNDAF focus areas: 1) Peace and Cohesion, Effective Democratic Governance, and Human Rights, including deepening state building, security and justice for all; 2) Social Inclusion and Equity, encompassing issues of social protection, food security, education and health; and 3) Inclusive and Sustainable Growth for Poverty Reduction, with particular attention to vulnerable groups, including women and youth, as well as to disaster-prone communities.

II. Results

The Acceleration of Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (ARWEE) programme implemented jointly with UN Women, FAO, IFAD and WFP has been launched in the Kyrgyz Republic as part of a 5-year global joint initiative in October 2012. Due to challenges in mobilization of resources for the programme faced for about two years in late 2013 three partner agencies, namely UN Women, FAO and WFP, have decided to start some pilot activities with own resources.

While the majority of the results achieved by the programme in 2014 are attributable to the joint efforts of three partner agencies, funding from the MPTF received in October 2014 has also made a contribution to the overall programme results in 2014. However it is difficult to clearly attribute certain results to the specific source of funding. Overall, the programme has fully achieved all output indicators within Outcome 1 "Rural women have increased income, better livelihoods and food security from enhanced agricultural productivity", which allows assuming that programme has made a significant contribution to achievement of Outcome 1. Thus, as a result of social mobilization and a series of trainings on group solidarity, gender and development, business planning, and value chain development provided by UN Women, FAO and WFP 231 vulnerable household members, including 212 women, in seven pilot communities of the Kyrgyz Republic, have improved access and control over kitchen garden land plots for productive agricultural activity. Target beneficiaries included the most vulnerable households, mostly represented by women, with limited or no prior experience of receiving external assistance, and restricted access to productive resources. The vulnerability of the target group has been identified through participatory poverty pyramid exercise, whereby the local population defined the different levels of poverty in their communities. The most vulnerable have been then identified and communicated to the local population and authorities. Subsequent visit to each household later confirmed the status and eligibility of each group member to participate in the programme. The programme was designed to make effective participation and benefit for the target group possible. Thus, quality agricultural inputs were provided for a small size of land plot (0.05 ha) usually attached to the house (kitchen garden), which is managed by women in the households and do not require

extra time for commuting. Given limited exposure of the target group to agricultural and market knowledge regular extension support has been ensured and group solidarity built to promote joint action and mutual support. With regular agriculture extension support, rural women have put the quality agricultural inputs and limited productive resources into effective use, obtaining a total of 576 tons of vegetables worth approximately USD 188,700 (Indicator 1.1.1). Over 80% of the produce has been sold at the local markets bringing additional income to the households and elevating the status of women in the families besides improving the families' economic situation. This has contributed to increased food security, better family nutrition, and more economically viable livelihood alternatives securing higher value agricultural income and reducing their vulnerability to weather shocks. The community-run revolving funds have established from repaid cost of agricultural inputs provided. The 36 self-help-groups have been organized in five Community Funds the chair and secretary of which have been elected from among participating men and women. The Community funds allow sustainable use of these resources by community members for purchasing of high quality inputs thus supporting sustainable livelihoods for the most vulnerable women and men (Indicator 1.2.1).

This joint programme builds on the past successful partnership between UN Women, FAO and WFP utilizing the comparative advantage of each agency within their respective mandate: FAO's policy assistance on agriculture and food security, value chain training and normative work, WFP's food assistance innovations, and UN Women's technical expertise on women's economic empowerment and its mandate to promote accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment. The partnership proved effective and mutually reinforcing. Thus the social mobilization, savings, and group solidarity training ensured membership discipline in self-help groups, accurate use of seeds, fertilizers, and food, as well as consistent and systematic application of new knowledge on agricultural technologies and food security.

Funding from the MPTF has been received in late October 2014 in support of the ongoing programme. In order to further develop marketing and planning skills of programme beneficiaries and enable their effective participation in the market of agricultural produce during November-December 2014 WFP has conducted value chain development trainings, which included sessions on marketing, rapid market assessment, business and financial planning. As a result of the training, the self-help groups have acquired market assessment skills and developed business plans, which they will use to choose the type of vegetables to produce and the manner in which they will plan and execute their activities for greater results in the coming spring season (Indicator 1.1.2). Considering the vulnerable background of beneficiaries, often forcing them to refrain from training activities in favour of their productive activities (time poverty) ARWEE beneficiaries are offered food assistance for their participation in training through Food for Training component. A total of 24.782 metric tons of food (23.1 metric ton of wheat flour with micronutrients and 1.682 metric ton of vegetable oil enriched with vitamins A and D) has been distributed. Each participating household received 100 kg of wheat flour and 8 liters of oil, which resulted in 1,233 project participants benefiting from food assistance (Indicator 1.1.3). Food assistance supported project participants by providing an investment in human capital by overcoming the food gap that vulnerable women-headed households face, while also permitting the consumption of WFP-supplied fortified food and more varied purchase of local foods to improve the overall well-being of project participants. Food assistance through its income transfer effect also facilitated the participation of women in training sessions on growing of vegetables and contributions to revolving funds.

While improved food security and livelihoods are an important step towards economic empowerment of rural women, the effects cannot be lasted and expanded unless their participation in the local development processes is ensured. Due to limited funding available from partner agencies' own funds the decision has been made to concentrate joint efforts on achieving Outcome 1 of the programme in 2014. Therefore the focus of 2015 has been put on achieving Outcome 2 of the programme document. In 2015 the programme will capitalize on the women's economic self-sufficiency and practical skills of joint action and business planning in order to increase rural women's meaningful participation in the local decision-making and development planning processes, which influence their lives, to capacitate local self-authorities in inclusive

and gender responsive planning, and to support national level policy environment promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

Challenges and lessons learned

Many communities have faced harsh weather conditions, which threatened the harvest of many during 2014. Programme partners have applied extra efforts to work with local governments and gain their support and participation in ensuring steady water supply to the gardens of the beneficiaries. Often programme beneficiaries include the socially vulnerable and excluded members of the communities, therefore active involvement of local self governments have been seen as key in ensuring equal access to the community managed resources.

Challenges faced in mobilizing resources for ARWEE programme globally have led to delay in implementation by almost two years after the official launch of the programme. The limited seed funds contributed from the three partner agencies' own resources have been useful to start pilot activities, yet insufficient to implement activities across all programme outcomes. This resulted in the delayed results under the female participation and leadership outcome, as well as very small number of programme beneficiaries. National level activities for supporting enabling environment and policy making requires more substantial pilot results and a critical mass of rural women leaders capacitated to inform policy making processes at both local and national levels, and carry out effective lobbying efforts. Achieving such level of capacity among rural women requires at least 5-year programme period initially designed. However only three years remain for programme implementation. Therefore more active resource mobilization is needed for prolonged period of programme implementation in order to achieve the expected outcomes to the full extent.

ii) Indicator Based Performance Assessment:

Using the **Programme Results Framework from the Project Document / AWP** - provide an update on the achievement of indicators at both the output and outcome level in the table below. Where it has not been possible to collect data on indicators, clear explanation should be given explaining why, as well as plans on how and when this data will be collected.

| | <u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets | Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any) | Source of Verification |
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| Outcome 1 Rural women have increased income, better livelihoods and food security from enhanced agricultural productivity | | | |
| <p>Output 1.1 Rural women mobilised in self-help groups and with access to agricultural inputs to undertake joint economic activities</p> <p>Indicator 1.1.1 Number of SHGs received economic inputs for agri/livestock activities and participated in the Food for Asset/Training component Baseline: 36 SHG Planned Target: 36 SHG</p> <p>Indicator 1.1.2 % of women members of SHGs have gained knowledge in marketing and basic financial and business skills as well as market assessment Baseline: 30 Planned Target: at least 70%</p> <p>Indicator 1.1.3 % of families of SHGs having increased access to diversified diet both during harvest and lean seasons (% of families with improved food consumption indicators) Baseline: 6.1 Planned Target: at least 90%</p> | <p>36 SHGs with 231 members received vegetable seeds and received 24.782 MT of food products</p> <p>85% of the training participants are equipped with knowledge in marketing and basic financial and business skills as well as market assessment</p> <p>100% of families of SHGs have increased access to diversified diets during harvest and lean seasons (% of families with improved food consumption and dietary diversity)</p> | <p>Fully achieved in 2014</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> | <p>Seed distribution reports, food distribution report from the cooperating partner CDA, together with WFP Field Monitor Reports</p> <p>Post-training evaluation report</p> <p>Verification and post- distribution monitoring reports</p> |

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| <p>Output 1.2 Rural women are equipped with the skills and knowledge to run economic activities with support from revolving fund</p> <p>Indicator 1.2.1 Number of women organisations (Community Funds, cooperatives, CBOs) run economic activities with support from Revolving Fund (RV) Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 5</p> | <p>5 Community funds have been established, revolving funds have been collected and expected to be put in use in spring 2015</p> | <p>Achieved</p> | <p>Community funds registration with the local self government bodies, bank accounts with collected repayments</p> |
| <p>Outcome 2 Rural women have mastered leadership and actively participate in shaping laws, policies and systems of service provision at local and central levels</p> | | | |
| <p>Output 2.1 Rural women have mastered leadership skills to participate in and influence decision making at local and central levels</p> <p>Indicator 2.1.1 Number of rural women leaders participated in the process of local planning and budgeting Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 30</p> <p>Indicator 2.1.2 Number of rural women participated in policy lobbying activities at central level Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 5</p> | | <p>Activities planned to take place in 2015</p> | |
| <p>Output 2.2 Local governments have increased capacities to ensuring transparent and gender responsive planning and budgeting system</p> <p>Indicator 2.2.1 Number of local development plans/budgets developed based on participatory process Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 5</p> | | <p>Activities planned to take place in 2015</p> | |

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| <p>Output 2.3 Rural women are equipped with the skills and knowledge to participate in and influence decisions of local service providers</p> <p>Indicator 2.3.1 Share of rural women participate in Association of Water Users and Pasture Committees Baseline: 0 Planned Target: at least 30% of members are women</p> <p>Indicator 2.3.2 Share of priorities proposed by rural women included in the AWUs / PC development plans Baseline: 0 Planned Target: at least 30%</p> | | <p>Activities planned to take place in 2015</p> | |
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iii) A Specific Story

The Rural Women's Economic Empowerment project is bringing real change in the lives of vulnerable households. The project particularly helps to improve their household income through improved skills and knowledge gained in growing vegetables as well as improving their dietary diversity by consuming home grown vegetables. Many participants, particularly in Naryn, a northern province, believed that vegetables could not grow in their area due to severe climate conditions unlike in the south. Producers were also lacking the necessary skills to be able to successfully market their produce. For these reasons, their involvement in vegetable production was limited.

The beliefs of women vegetable growers in Naryn were shattered after project participants collected a good harvest as a result of receiving quality seeds and agro-trainings from FAO, of supporting each other through self-help groups, which were formed with assistance from UN Women, and after having received WFP food assistance as enabling investment into human capital, which supported them to follow through the various aspects of the project. Each participant generated an average income of 46,000 KGS per year after having invested about 4,000 KGS.

In one particular case, Orozova Gulnara, a project participant from Jumgal district of Naryn province, a mother of five children, lived in a difficult economic condition and her family hardly made both ends meet. She noted that her life and position has greatly improved after she joined the project. Gulnara dutifully fulfilled all what was expected from her in the project: attended training sessions and grew cucumbers with other fellows in her group. After generating income from selling her harvest, she bought more varied food products and took her children to the market to buy clothes for school. The group leader Tamchygul, who met Gulnara at the market, later said that Gulnara emotionally expressed that she felt a motherly happiness for the first time at the age of 40 now that she has money and can meet her family and children's needs. Until then she could only meet basic necessities and provide her children with old clothes that she would get from people in her community. There was a change in the life of her family too. Gulnara's husband, who turned into an alcoholic and was prone to violence because of his desperate situation in the face of unemployment and poverty, stopped drinking alcohol. He started respecting his wife and decided to help her in vegetable growing. Gulnara grew produce on the plot of 0,025 ha of land last year. This year, Gulnara and her husband are planning to grow on the 0.01 ha of land. They now together see a better future and have already started thinking of different ideas to further improve this activity and are contemplating plans for processing their produce.

III. Other Assessments or Evaluations

- No assessments or evaluations have taken place during 2014

IV. Programmatic Revisions

- Programme implementation within this project has just started and no revisions have taken place yet.

V. Resources

- ARWEE Programme Manager has been hired in late 2014 with the main task to coordinate programme implementation between three partner agencies. WFP has started implementing its part of activities in 2014. FAO and UN Women have started selection of NGO partners to be finalized in 2015.

- Programme partners have actively contributed to development of the ProDoc for Sida funds expected from MPTF in early 2015. The ProDoc has been designed to align with the current activities and upscale them to additional provinces of the country.