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

UPDATE FEBRUARY 2016

Context
Rural women are key agents for achieving the transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. But limited access to credit, health care and education are among the many challenges they face, which are further aggravated by the global food and economic crises and climate change. Ensuring their empowerment is key not only to the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities, but also to overall economic productivity, given women’s large presence in the agricultural workforce worldwide. Transforming Our World: Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development adopted in September 2015 by Member States of the United Nations presents a significant opportunity to implement the new development agenda with and for the benefit of women. Indeed, rural women are vital to the success of the SDGs: from the goal to end poverty and hunger everywhere, improve food security and nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture and, above all, achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Programme Overview
Recognizing the central role of rural women, FAO, IFAD, UN Women and WFP have joined efforts for the implementation of the programme “Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women” (RWEE). This 5-year pilot initiative builds on each Agency’s comparative advantage and strengths in order to achieve lasting, impactful changes to improve the status of women in rural areas through four main outcomes:

- Improved food and nutrition security
- Increased income to sustain livelihoods
- Enhanced participation in decision-making at community level
- More gender-responsive policy environment.

Expected Results
Currently implemented in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda, the project aims to directly support a total of 75,000 rural women while benefitting over 400,000 households and community members up to October 2017, current end date of RWEE. In each country, women beneficiaries are receiving training and technical assistance to increase and diversify their productivity, as well as targeted support to increase their participation in the life of the communities.

2015 Highlights and Success Stories

**RWEE PROGRAM WIDE**
REACHING OVER 75,000 RURAL WOMEN IN 7 COUNTRIES.
400,000 HOUSEHOLDS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS WILL BENEFIT FROM PROGRAMME INTERVENTIONS.

**ETHIOPIA**
CONDUCTED THE FEASIBILITY STUDY & MARKET ASSESSMENT TO IDENTIFY THE BEST TECHNOLOGIES AND FEASIBLE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS FOR RURAL WOMEN.

**GUATEMALA**
MORE THAN 400 RURAL WOMEN TRAINED ON HOW TO INCREASE PRODUCTION & DIVERSIFY LOCAL CROPS.

“I feel motivated to be in the programme because it’s the first time we are supported in our plots and receive training where we acquire more knowledge in a practical way.”
—Josefina Ico Quej, President of the Comprehensive Development Committee for Women in La Tinta, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala

**KYRGYZSTAN**
DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEMS INSTALLED ON 12 DEMONSTRATION PLOTS BENEFITTING 1,500 WOMEN FARMERS WHO WILL LEARN HOW TO INCREASE THEIR PRODUCTION THANKS TO THE USE OF SIMPLE AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES.

“Thanks to the Joint Programme, I’m now expecting to harvest three times more vegetables and fruits than in the past year.”
—Ainagul Abdakhanmova, Kyrgyzstan. Mother of 5 and only breadwinner in her household, she received a drip irrigation system for her land.
LIBERIA
BUILT THE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITIES OF 115 WOMEN LEADERS REPRESENTING 1,000 MEMBERS OF FARM GROUPS.

“...I feel more confident and capable to manage the group and increase their vegetable production.”
—Mary Kpadeh, leader of a farm group in Grand-Bassa, Liberia. She participated in a training on leadership skills and organizational development.

NEPAL
RWEE SUPPORTED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST-EVER GENDER & SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY OF MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT.

RWANDA
MORE THAN 400 MEMBERS OF FARMERS’ ORGANIZATIONS ATTENDED A WORKSHOP ON HOW TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO MARKET.

NIGER
CREATED 30 DIMITRA CLUBS: GROUPS OF MORE THAN 1,000 WOMEN, MEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO MEET REGULARLY TO DISCUSS THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE IN THEIR DAILY LIVES, MAKE DECISIONS AND TAKE ACTION TO RESOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS.

“...There was domestic violence in the village. But since the establishment of the clubs violence has decreased a lot. The interactions and exchanges among men and women have encouraged mutual understanding.”
—Biba Saley, leader of one of the Dimitra clubs established in Dosso, Niger

LIBERIA & KYRGYZSTAN
RWEE-SUPPORTED NATIONAL RURAL WOMEN CONFERENCES HAVE BROUGHT BACK TO THE GOVERNMENTS’ AGENDA THE STATUS OF RURAL WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT.

Governance
Ownership is the best strategy to guarantee that a development project succeeds and expands in the long run. This is why National Steering Committees have been established in each RWEE country, co-chaired by a high-level representatives of the Government, and providing coordination and guidance on programme strategic vision and implementation.

At the global level, an International Steering Committee, composed by representatives of the 4 Agencies’ focal points, donors, and participating countries, oversees the allocation of funds and offers strategic vision, with a Coordination Unit and a Technical Advisory Committee providing operational support.

Financial Management & Funding Gaps
A Multi-Partner Trust Fund (RWEE Fund) administered by UNDP’s Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF Office) was created to enhance collaboration and ensure transparency and efficiency in the utilization of funds. As of December 2015, the revised overall budget for the RWEE program up to October 2017 is estimated at almost USD 33 million for the 7 countries:

- Liberia: $4,873,977
- Nepal: $3,768,857
- Niger: $5,116,381
- Rwanda: $5,000,000
- Kyrgyzstan: $6,303,012
- Guatemala: $2,391,052
- Ethiopia: $3,208,752

Thanks to the generous contributions of Norway and Sweden, more than USD 16.5 million have already been allocated, reducing the funding gap to USD 16.3 million, corresponding to 50% of the planned budget.

Mobilize additional resources is essential to continue the activities in 2016 & 2017 as per the needs identified jointly by the communities and the Country Teams, and achieve the target of reaching 75,000 rural women and their families.

Knowledge Management
As a pilot initiative, RWEE aims to identify key lessons and best practices that could help shape future policies for UN collaboration. This is why a knowledge management system has been created with a dedicated platform for RWEE programme teams to build on the different countries’ experiences in order to upscale and expand innovative models on rural women’s economic empowerment.

For additional information, please contact:

Azzurra Chiarini RWEE Coordination UNIT | Email: azzurra.chiarini@wfp.org | Tel: +3906 65133424
Web: http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/RWF00