Joint Programme on
Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment

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 have been further aggravated by recent economic and food crises, and climate change. Ensuring their empowerment is key not only to the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities, but also to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Programme overview
The Joint Programme on “Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women” (JP RWEE) is a global initiative whose overarching goal is to secure rural women’s livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development.

Jointly implemented by FAO, IFAD, WFP and UN Women in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger, and Rwanda, the JP RWEE builds on each Agency’s comparative advantage and strengths in order to improve the status of women in rural areas. JPRWEE has four main outcomes:

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

Key results
The programme is currently supporting over 56,500 participants (44,500 rural women and 12,000 rural men) and 261,000 members of their families, with a potential to scale up if further contributions are received. Some of the key results achieved so far include:

• 70% average increase in agricultural production
• Over 1 million USD generated from sales
• 35,000 women accessed credit;
• Over 40,000 people attended sensitization campaign on women’s rights
• 1,500 government officials at all levels with enhanced skills on gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive budgeting, and women’s rights,
• National governments of Guatemala, Ethiopia and Nepal supported for the development and implementation of gender policies in the agricultural sector.

This holistic approach has also allowed to broaden the scope of the programme to include activities that focus on combating Gender-Based Violence.

Budget
Approved contribution
$21,641,047

Funding gap
$13,358,953

38%
62%
**Why is it working?**

- The JP RWEE offers integrated, **holistic support** to tackle structural gender inequalities that prevent many women and girls from realizing their economic rights and autonomy.
- Each participating UN Organization is building on its **comparative advantages.**
- **Same beneficiaries** and target areas to maximize impact.
- **Active engagement of men** to support gender equality.
- Creation and formalization of **women’s groups** to promote collective action and economic activities.
- **National ownership** of activities through regular involvement of local governments.
- **South-South cooperation** and exchanges on good practices and lessons learnt among country teams.
- Inclusion of **climate resilient agricultural techniques** in training.
- Access to **financial services** to unleash the productive potential of vulnerable women.
- Inclusive governance structure that ensures smooth implementation and **sustainability.**
- **Dedicated staff** (national and global coordinators) to ensure programme-wide coherence and impact.
- Potential to **replicate the successful model** in other countries.

**Voices from the field**

"We have shown the community that women can succeed in activities beyond those of housewife."

**Zoila, Guatemala**

“We learned a great deal about malnutrition and the role of food in our bodies and we are happy to pass this knowledge to other people so we are all going to pay closer attention to the food we give to our children.”

**Biba, Niger**

“As women, we feel we are making a difference. We can now support our families by earning money and buying supplies and medicines”

**Chanda, Nepal**

“If it wasn’t for the members of the group, I would not be able to cultivate my land. They helped me with the planting, and then to install drip irrigation”

**Ainagul, Kyrgyzstan**

“After participating in the gender-awareness session, both my husband and myself became comfortable discussing issues that affect out lives”

**Messay, Ethiopia**

“With the increase income from the maize I sell, I was able to buy two additional hectares of land for farming. But, more importantly, I am now able to pay school fees for my four children”

**Anastasia, Rwanda**

“Now they see me as a good leader. I am ready to take my group to the next level, becoming a role model, not only for my family and fellow members of the group, but also for my community”

**Mari, Liberia**