



**FINAL PROGRAMME REPORT  
MPTF OFFICE GENERIC FINAL PROGRAMME<sup>1</sup> NARRATIVE REPORT  
REPORTING PERIOD: OCTOBER 2014 TO JUNE 2021**

<p align="center"><b>Programme Title &amp; Project Number</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme Title: Accelerating Progress Toward Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in Liberia</li> <li>• Programme Number (if applicable)</li> <li>• MPTF Office Project Reference Number: 3 00092003</li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b>Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results<sup>2</sup></b></p> <p><i>Liberia, West Africa</i> Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Bassa, Maryland, River Gee, and Sinoe Counties</p> <p><i>The Joint Programme on Rural Women Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE) in Liberia strategic result is securing rural women’s livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development and the post MDGs, based on four outcome areas: improved food and nutrition security; increased income to secure their livelihoods; enhanced leadership and participation in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies, and programmes; and a gender responsive policy environment for the economic empowerment of rural women.</i></p> <p align="center"><b>Programme Beneficiaries</b></p> <p>Number of participants from the beginning of the Joint Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct: 17,832 beneficiaries (16,144 women and 1,688 men)</li> <li>• Indirect: 47,080 beneficiaries (41,471 women and 5,609 men)<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Participating Organization(s)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations that have received direct funding from the MPTF Office under this programme include UN Women, FAO, and WFP</li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b>Implementing Partners</b></p> <p><b>Government institutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection</li> <li>• Ministry of Agriculture</li> <li>• Ministry of Finance and Development Planning</li> <li>• Cooperative Development Agency</li> <li>• Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services</li> </ul> <p><b>Non-Governmental Organizations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Adult Education Association of Liberia</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> The term “programme” is used for programmes, joint programmes, and projects.

<sup>2</sup> Strategic Results, as formulated in the Strategic UN Planning Framework (e.g., UNDAF) or project document.

<sup>3</sup> The MPTF Office Project Reference Number is the same number as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as “Project ID” on the project’s factsheet page on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).

<sup>4</sup> Indirect beneficiaries were calculated based on the average size of the Liberian household in targeted counties.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rights and Rice Foundation</li> <li>• EduCARE Liberia</li> <li>• Agro-Machinery Company</li> <li>• Farmers Assistance Programme</li> <li>• Volunteers for Sustainable Development in Africa</li> <li>• Rights and Rice Foundation</li> </ul> <p><b>Civil Society Organizations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liberia National Rural Women’s Structure</li> <li>• Liberia Marketing Association</li> <li>• Association of Women in Cross Border Trade</li> <li>• National Peace Hut Women of Liberia</li> <li>• Action for Gender Equality</li> </ul> <p><b>Private Sector</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orange Liberia</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</b></p> <p>Total approved budget as per project document: MPTF /JP Contribution<sup>5</sup>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN Women, Lead agency US\$ 2,046,885.00</li> <li>• FAO, Participating agency US\$ 995,021.00</li> <li>• WFP, Participating agency US\$ 1,091,349.00</li> </ul> <p>Agency Contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN Women, Lead agency US\$154,571.75</li> </ul> <p>Government Contribution <i>(if applicable)</i></p> <p>Other Contributions (donors) <i>(if applicable)</i></p> <p><b>TOTAL:</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Programme Duration</b></p> <p>Overall Duration (78 months) Start Date<sup>6</sup> (15 October 2014)</p> <p>Original End Date<sup>7</sup> (30 June 2020) Actual End date<sup>8</sup>(30 June 2021)</p> <p>Have agency(ies) operationally closed the Programme in its(their) system? <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No</p> <p>Expected Financial Closure date<sup>9</sup>: 31/05/2022</p>
<p><b>Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.</b></p> <p>Evaluation Completed <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No Date: 31 March 2021 Evaluation Report - Attached <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No Date: 31 August 2021</p>	<p align="center"><b>Report Submitted By</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Name: Ramon G. Garway</li> <li>○ Title: National Coordinator</li> <li>○ Participating Organization (Lead): UN Women</li> <li>○ Email address: <a href="mailto:ramon.garway@unwomen.org">ramon.garway@unwomen.org</a></li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> The MPTF/JP Contribution is the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations – see [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).

<sup>6</sup> The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent. Transfer date is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).

<sup>7</sup> As per approval of the original project document by the relevant decision-making body/Steering Committee.

<sup>8</sup> If there has been an extension, then the revised, approved end date should be reflected here. If there has been no extension approved, then the current end date is the same as the original end date. The end date is the same as the operational closure date which is when all activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MPTF / JP have been completed. As per the MOU, agencies are to notify the MPTF Office when a programme completes its operational activities. Please see [MPTF Office Closure Guidelines](#).

<sup>9</sup> Financial Closure requires the return of unspent balances and submission of the [Certified Final Financial Statement and Report](#).

## ACRONYMS

<b>AMC</b>	Agro-Machinery Company
<b>AWICBT</b>	Association of Women in Cross Border Trade
<b>BDS</b>	Business Development Skills
<b>CACs</b>	County Agriculture Coordinators
<b>CDA</b>	Cooperative Development Agency
<b>CGRs</b>	Community Grain Reserves
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FAP</b>	Farmers Assistance Programme
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group's Discussions
<b>FSN</b>	Food Security and Nutrition
<b>GCCs</b>	Gender County Coordinators
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
<b>GM</b>	Governance Commission
<b>GRB</b>	Gender Responsive Budgeting
<b>JP RWEE</b>	Joint Programme on Rural Women Economic Empowerment
<b>LD</b>	Liberian Dollar
<b>LISGIS</b>	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
<b>LLA</b>	Liberia Authority
<b>LMA</b>	Liberia Marketing Association
<b>LNRWS</b>	Liberia Nation Rural Women Structure
<b>MFDP</b>	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
<b>MIA</b>	Ministry of Internal Affairs
<b>MoA</b>	Ministry of Agriculture
<b>MoCI</b>	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MGCSP</b>	Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>MoJ</b>	Ministry of Justice
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MT</b>	Metric Tone
<b>MYS</b>	Ministry of Youth and Sports
<b>NAEAL</b>	National Adult Education Association of Liberia
<b>NPHWOL</b>	National Peace Hut Women of Liberia
<b>NSC</b>	National Steering Committee
<b>PAPD</b>	Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
<b>POs</b>	Producer Organizations
<b>RRF</b>	Rights Rice Foundation
<b>SAA</b>	Standard Administrative Arrangement
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
<b>SRH</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health
<b>THINK</b>	Touching Humanity in Need of Kindness
<b>UNAIDS</b>	United Nations AIDS
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
<b>VSLA</b>	Village Savings and Loan Association
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE) was implemented in Liberia from October 2014 to June 2021 in Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Bassa, Maryland, River Gee, and Sinoe Counties. The overall goal of the programme was to secure women's livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development. This final report highlights results, challenges, lessons learned, and best practices under programme implementation at country level. The report also reflects the level of coordination with the UN System; the Government of Liberia represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Services; civil society; and the private sector.

The programme reached a total of 17,832 beneficiaries (16,144 and 1,688 men), including the most vulnerable people in food insecure communities. Significant results were achieved across all of the four programme outcomes. In targeted rural areas improved their food and nutrition security (Outcome 1) as a result of increased access to and control over resources, assets, and services that enabled them to increase their agricultural production. The development of food reserves helped to mitigate against unstable local agricultural markets and shocks. Under Outcome 2, rural women significantly increased incomes and savings, contributing to stable livelihoods and access to decent work. During the programme, 3,132 women generated US\$ 358,397.54 in income and approximately US\$ 300,000.00 in savings. This was achieved through working with women's cooperatives and Producer Organisations and through women's small enterprises and resulted in greater economic independence for women and increased control over the income they earn, as well as increasing their status at household level as income earners. Increased savings also led to women investing in developing their business, purchasing land and social insurance, and building their own homes. Under Outcome 3, which aimed at improving women's participation and leadership in rural communities, 18.46% of beneficiaries were elected as representatives in rural councils on agricultural development and natural resources management. Furthermore, 1,162 women beneficiaries are now active members of land committees and an additional 5 Producer Organisations are led by women in the targeted communities. Monitoring data showed that women participating in the programme now feel that they have a voice in their homes and have improved their self-esteem, and self-confidence. Women's social capital was increased and they feel more respected in their communities. Finally, under Outcome 4 the JP RWEE contributed to advocacy on policy relating to gender and rural women's economic empowerment and strengthened the capacity of local and national government stakeholders in this regard. For example, the programme supported the mid-term review of the National Gender Policy and also contributed to the process involved in the development of the 'Land Rights Act' which was signed into law in 2018, guaranteeing women rights to land ownership.

The JP RWEE worked closely with national government, who were represented on the National Steering Committee, and also with local government, both in building their capacity and also developing local ownership through their involvement in programme implementation and monitoring. A number of partnerships were developed, including with the private sector and with other UN programmes, which maximized the opportunities available to work towards women's economic empowerment.

## I. Purpose

The JP RWEE provided strategic support to the Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning; the Ministry of Agriculture; and the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection in furtherance of its national priority plan, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD 2018 - 2023). This was intended to contribute to economic growth with women and girls including the youth as key target groups, through (1) improved food and nutrition security, (2) increased income for sustained livelihoods, (3) enhanced leadership and participation with rural women, (4) and a gender-responsive policy environment that promotes rural women economic empowerment. The programme contributed to the achievement of multiple sustainable development goals, including SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 2: Zero Hunger, SDG 5: Gender Equality, and SDG 17. Results of the programmes show that the JP RWEE has made some important contributions in these areas. The programme has been considered highly strategic to national development and was selected as one of the UN System's flagships for implementing the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020 - 2024 in Liberia.

## II. Assessment of Programme Results

### i) Narrative reporting on results:

#### **Outcome 1: Rural women have improved food and nutrition security.**

To achieve enhanced food security and nutrition, the JP RWEE implemented activities, including the provision of inputs and capacity strengthening, which resulted in an increase in women farmers' agricultural production. This resulted in a 67% average increase in crop yields (73% increase for rice, 68% increase for cassava and 60% for vegetable). During the post-harvest seasons from 2016 to 2021, crop diversification, including production of nutrient-dense crops, was observed which also contributed to an increase in the number of food groups (e.g., carbohydrates, fats, dietary fiber, protein, and vitamins) consumed by women and their households over this period. A total of 88% of beneficiaries at household level now consume food from four or more food groups evidenced by their consumption of rice, vegetables, fish, eggs, etc.<sup>10</sup> In addition, women and their households, especially in communities with grain reserves, were protected against shocks to food consumption, particularly during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic when households were able to mitigate against the impact of the pandemic on food and nutrition security through accessing reserves.

Harvest losses (e.g., on-farm losses, and losses along the food chain during transportation, storage, and processing) were considered a key challenge that undermined food security and income generation in targeted communities at the start of the JP RWEE. Women beneficiaries now have links to markets to sell their produce; improved storage for grains; advanced grain drying equipment to protect produce from the rain for reducing food losses; and improved knowledge on post-harvest handling and storage of the crops they handle.

#### **Output 1.1: Rural women have increased access to and control over resources, assets, and services critical for their food and nutrition security.**

A total of 17 women-led agricultural cooperatives comprising 3,145 women beneficiaries have accessed more than US\$ 300,000 in credit through VSLAs and through a partnership with Orange

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<sup>10</sup> JP RWEE Field Progress Reports.

Money<sup>11</sup>. The leadership of 18 farming groups, comprised of 1,966 women, received training on organizational development and leadership skills and are now able to better manage and lead their respective farming groups. The cooperatives received training in organizational development and loans management (e.g., issuance, repayment, and food commodity management). A total of 17 cooperatives were supported, a reduction from the planned target of 25 due to the national lockdown and movement restrictions imposed in response to COVID-19.

In addition, the JP RWEE supported land tenure and land use rights through awareness-raising for promoting equal access to, and ownership of, land for agricultural production. Women beneficiaries have been demanding respect of their land ownership rights from local traditional leaders and their male counterparts, and the recently approved Land Rights Act is an important tool to help guarantee the enjoyment of their rights. A total of 11,394 women and 1,688 young men beneficiaries have also accessed critical farming inputs such as high-quality seeds, tools, and labor-saving technologies for increasing production. Labour-saving equipment such as power tiller, rice mills, cassava mills, and destoners assisted in relieving the work burden of women in farming communities. A total of 14,762 beneficiaries (13,074 women and 1,688 men) received training in nutrition sensitive and climate smart agriculture, including extension and advisory services. Hence, they are now engaged in nutrition-sensitive and climate-smart agriculture practices such as inter crop production, livestock production, sharing land and other resources to meet their needs, and are working to maintain a system of sustainable production over time.

### **Output 1.2: Rural women have a greater capacity to enhance and control local food security reserves and their production.**

A total of 7 women-led community grain reserves (innovative food processing facilities) were constructed in 5 counties to enhance production for 13,074 women and 1,688 young men beneficiaries. Grain reserves, equipped with materials for processing, packaging, and labeling, gave women and men beneficiaries the space and tools to engage in value-chain development. They also served as centers for the rollout of capacity building training for 14,732 women beneficiaries in value chain development (e.g., rice, cassava, etc.). An important result for beneficiaries' resilience is that the rice stored in the reserves was used by beneficiaries to address food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The JP RWEE also provided capacity-building training for 14,762 beneficiaries (13,074 women and 1,688 men) in food processing and storage, using innovative, productivity enhancing, and cultural-sensitive technologies for strengthening women and men beneficiaries' productive capacities including: the use of agricultural technologies, improved crop planting, cultivation, harvesting, preservation and packaging, nutrition-sensitive, and climate-smart agriculture. Overall, there are now 13,074 women beneficiaries and 1,688 men beneficiaries who have accessed motorized cassava graters for adding value to cassava and rice (e.g., farina production; rice flour). These beneficiaries have accessed and continue to access food processing facilities in Maryland, River Gee, Sinoe, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties. They now have the skills to produce cassava flour, cassava bread and super gari from cassava, to mill their rice and package them in bags for sale. These trainings have given beneficiaries the knowledge and skills to continue to add value to their products and to engage in better practices for increasing production and access to market opportunities. This included selling value-added products (e.g., super-gari and cassava flour) to minimarts and women owned shops across targeted counties.

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<sup>11</sup> The partnership with Orange creates employment opportunities for women as mobile money agents; provides infrastructure support for mobile money kiosks managed by women agents; and initiates digital literacy classes.

More than 455 women-led associations (e.g., VSLAs) were established and members were trained to enhance their capacity to jointly manage productive assets and for delivering effective extension and advisory services. This was in addition to their support for women's access to rural credit for investing in agribusinesses for income generation. The programme also adapted the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach<sup>12</sup> for 11,394 women beneficiaries in targeted communities. This provided them the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience at community and district levels.

## **Outcome 2: Rural women have increased income to secure their livelihoods**

Increased income of rural women was achieved primarily through the provision of trainings on literacy, business development, entrepreneurial and marketing skills (including packaging, value addition, storage, food quality control and negotiating skills) to 16,276 participants (16,144 women and 132 men). The total cumulative monetary values of sales (excluding those made through WFP's Purchase for Progress modality) achieved by the groups over the programme period was US\$ 358,397.54.

In addition, value chain development with women smallholder farmers helped to increase agribusinesses' efficiency in delivering the most value for the least possible cost at local level. Investments here have also created a competitive advantage for women and youth farmers by increasing their productivity. For example, farmer groups that have now been established into formal cooperatives are involved in the production of cassava flour, pepper sauce, etc.

Rural women smallholder farmers have access to productive resources (e.g., machinery, storage facilities, etc.) and safety nets such as food commodities for production and access to finance through VSLAs that are allowing them to control and manage their own finances. Moreover, they now have increased voice, agency, and are also participating meaningfully in economic decision-making at the level of the household and community as evidenced by women's business decisions involving money.<sup>13</sup>

Strategic partnership with the private sector also supported women's access to employment opportunities and decent work in targeted counties.

### **Output 2.1: Rural women have enhanced entrepreneurship skills and value chains to access markets for their products.**

The total cumulative monetary value of sales made by women's groups was US\$ 358,397.54. The JP RWEE provided training to 16,144 women in literacy and numeracy skills, business development skills, and loan management skills. These pieces of training have increased the self-confidence and esteem of women, enhanced their decision-making skills at the level of the household and community, and increased their economic security. For example, improved skills, especially literacy and business, have given women increased respect in their communities and have enhanced their capacity to participate in decision-making processes. Before the JP RWEE, women beneficiaries in targeted communities suffered low self-confidence and were not participating in decision-making processes. To ensure sustainability of these interventions beyond the programme, the capacity of selected members of each of the community grain reserves received technical skills on the operation, management, and repairs of agriculture inputs (tools and equipment) through a private sector firm (Vishnu and Agro Tech) hired under the JP RWEE.

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<sup>12</sup> FAO's participatory method based on people-centered learning to create an environment conducive to learning; the manual used included FAO's Farmer Field School (FFS) Manual Special Framework of Assistance (SFA), Farmers Field School Methodology, and Farmer Field School Implementation Guide.

<sup>13</sup> JP RWEE 2018 Mid Term review.

In addition, the programme linked 1,966 women beneficiaries to markets within the framework of WFP's P4P<sup>14</sup> programme and other market opportunities. This included through access to two market stalls in Margibi and Maryland counties and the linkage of JP RWEE producers with local traders, restaurants, hotels, etc. and to the rice and cassava value chains development for value-addition and access to markets and information through extension and advisory services. Rice and cassava are the primary and secondary crops respectively in Liberia.

Overall, women and men beneficiaries have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

### **Output 2.2: Rural women have increased access to decent wage employment opportunities.**

Capacity building was provided for 3,202 women inclusive of 70 women with the private sector as mobile money agents and 3,132 as self-employed women operating small and medium enterprises. These beneficiaries had received capacity building in business development and other skills training for creating employment opportunities and accessing decent pay with both the private sector and through self-employment opportunities. These self-employed women beneficiaries have also created employment opportunities for over 2,349 women in their respective SMEs across Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Bassa, and Sinoe Counties. Thus, women beneficiaries have become employed with Orange Liberia as Orange Money Agents (mobile money agents) while other women beneficiaries have instituted self-employment opportunities through the setup of SMEs, managing their businesses, employing other women as assistants, and earning a decent wage.

### **Outcome 3: Rural women have enhanced leadership and participation in their communities and in rural institutions, and in shaping laws, policies, and programmes.**

Women's participation in producer organizations (POs) contributed to achieving their empowerment. These organizations have become crucial actors in providing services (e.g. enhancing access to and management of natural resources; improving access to information and knowledge; and facilitating small producers' participation in decision-making processes) to rural women and their communities. There are now 13 POs led by women and 1,162 women beneficiaries are active members of land committees. The participation and leadership of women in producer organizations facilitated ongoing rural and agricultural development efforts at the level of the community such as forming cooperatives to put their resources together for increased production. A total of 18.46% of rural women beneficiaries were elected in rural councils on agricultural development and natural resources management. This has enabled them to contribute to discussions, and decisions in relation to key policy process relating to women's land rights, trade, agriculture, decentralization, and constitutional reform.

During several capacity building exercises in the targeted project areas, women and girls shared their experiences in how they had developed their own goals and aspirations and started to take and act upon choices as pertaining to their own lives. Participants were interviewed individually after training sessions and asked specific gender questions relating to their lives, including their participation in decision making.

### **Output 3.1: Rural women, including young women, have enhanced confidence and leadership skills to participate in local governance**

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<sup>14</sup> WFP's initiative on to build functional and sustainable grain market structures and connect 6,000 smallholder farmers to markets.

The programme provided support to more than 1,162 young women beneficiaries through the distribution of school kits in project communities across Montserrado, Margibi, and Grand Bassa for their enrollment in secondary education. This also included trainings in leadership skills to promote their self-confidence and build their capacity to take on leadership roles in governance systems at the local level (e.g., land committees, development activities, etc.) for 14,982 other women beneficiaries.

In addition, the programme also provided training in literacy to 14,982 women beneficiaries through the administration of literacy classes. This output reached more than 1,162 young women enrolled in secondary education; and 14,982 other women beneficiaries completed literacy and numeracy skills classes. As a result, rural women were able to do simple bookkeeping/recording of their business transaction, a task which they have previously not been able to do.

### **Output 3.2: Rural women have greater organizational capacities to form, sustain and participate in POs, cooperatives, and unions**

The programme provided capacity-building training for women beneficiaries from VSLAs in the formation of cooperatives for transitioning them from the informal to the formal sector. This change is relevant as being in the formal sector, enables beneficiaries to have access to finance; enroll on vendor rosters and become legally recognized. The JP RWEE supported a total of 17 farming cooperatives across targeted counties.

In addition, 4 experience-sharing events were organized, to strengthen networking between women beneficiaries in the informal sector and formal organizations. Best practices and lessons learned shared by formal organizations, including the overall benefits of operating in the formal sector, encouraged the transition of more rural women beneficiaries from the informal sector to the formal sector, either through the formation of cooperatives or joining producer organizations.

During the reporting period, 25 informal women's groups (325 women) joined 13 formally registered POs which subsequently enabled their participation in the formal sector. More than 11,394 women beneficiaries were reached.

### **Output 3.3: Rural women, including young women, have increased capacity to engage in and influence relevant policy forums at national and regional levels.**

A total of 4 key advocacy platforms, namely Liberia National Rural Women Structure, Association of Women in Cross Border Trade, Liberia Marketing Association, and the National Peace Hut Women of Liberia were further strengthened to engage in national and regional processes as it relates to empowering rural women in agriculture for improved food and nutrition security; rural women in cross border traders engagement with national and regional policymakers to improve intra-African trade; and rural women contribution to peacebuilding and conflict mitigation as it relates to the management of land, the environment, and other natural resources.

One rural women's conference was held with over 300 participants from the inception of the JP RWEE followed by 4 general assemblies attended by more than 320 participants, held in Liberia for networking rural women's organizations at sub-national and national levels for better information exchange, advocacy, coordination, and participation in national and local policy and decision-making processes (e.g., decentralization, land rights, and constitutional reform). The conference was attended by relevant government institutions, civil society organizations and rural women from the targeted programme areas. The outcomes from the rural women conference's included strengthened accountability of the LNRWS to rural women and an increased understanding of rural women in democratic representation, their rights, and responsibilities.

The outcomes from the general assemblies included a strengthened network of women cross border traders advocating for safer borders and better businesses; an increased awareness by policymakers on the contributions of women traders, their challenges, and the opportunities for involving women traders in regional policies and programmes for peacebuilding and economic growth; an enhanced regional collaboration within the region for addressing the needs of women in cross border trade; and an increased involvement of women in policies and processes as entry points for cross-sharing between networks of women traders within the region.

**Output 3.4: Rural women, including young women, have enhanced awareness of their rights in a more supportive community/local environment.**

A total of 8 community listeners clubs<sup>15</sup> comprising 900 young women beneficiaries under the JP RWEE were organized under 6 community peace huts in targeted counties. These structures are engaged with awareness-raising on issues related to Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Sexual and Reproductive Health, and HIV/AIDS at community level. Thus, the programme supported awareness-raising activities on women's rights (e.g., S/GBV, SRH, HIV/AIDS, land, the environment, and other natural resources) including COVID-19 prevention and referral. This was achieved through the administration of literacy classes, engagement with community radio stations, organization of community listeners clubs, and the use of other forums and/or platforms (e.g., LNRWS, AWICBT, LMA, and NPHWOL).

In addition, the JP RWEE also provided capacity building trainings for 1,658 men with an emphasis on masculinities, male and female stereotypes, and expectations surrounding gender issues. As a result, men are now challenging their own reflections about gender, stereotypes, and related expectations evidenced by them becoming male champions that are championing women as equal partners in the home and community at large. These men remain engaged with awareness-raising at community level on the different forms of violence, as well as the consequences for victims, perpetrators, and the wider community. The JP RWEE has given young men beneficiaries a chance to reflect on their own relation to gender-based violence and to discuss accountability in this regard. It has also sensitized men as male advocates to champion and support change in the contexts of changing gender discriminatory norms and attitudes, networking, and the sharing of knowledge.

This output reached 8 community listeners clubs<sup>16</sup> comprising 900 young women beneficiaries and 1,658 men beneficiaries.

**Outcome 4: A more gender responsive policy environment is secured for the economic empowerment of rural women**

In Liberia, land is sometimes the only available asset for women, especially for women in rural areas. For these women, land holds the key to economic empowerment and security. It gives them more influence over their finances and household decision-making processes, enables them to access credit

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<sup>15</sup> These clubs have empowered their members to become actors of their own development. As the clubs' members discuss different topics, share their diverse concerns, priorities and needs, their dialogues are aired by the local radio stations. Radio stations here have produced programmes in different Liberian dialects to increase knowledge and understanding of issues important for the lives of women and girls including their livelihoods.

<sup>16</sup> These clubs have empowered their members to become actors of their own development. As the clubs' members discuss different topics, share their diverse concerns, priorities and needs, their dialogues are aired by the local radio stations. Radio stations here have produced programmes in different Liberian dialects to increase knowledge and understanding of issues important for the lives of women and girls including their livelihoods.

to start a business or to improve productivity with farming investments and, in many cases, the means to support their household.

The JP RWEE contributed to the passage of the Liberia's Land Rights Act through strengthening advocacy with key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Liberia Land Authority, and the Ministry of Agriculture. The Act, which was signed into law in September 2018, allows the rights over customary land regardless of gender and reinforces government's commitment to advance women's land rights.

Relevant Ministries, Agencies and Commissions are delivering evidence-based gender responsive development programmes, policies, and investments because of institutional strengthening through targeted trainings for gender focal points in gender responsive planning and budgeting. In addition, the Government of Liberia is implementing the revised National Gender Policy which currently aligns with its Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD 2018-2023) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2020-2024).

**Output 4.1: Policymakers and parliamentarians have enhanced capacities to effectively mainstream gender into the land, food, agriculture, nutrition, and rural employment policies, laws, and budgets.**

The JP RWEE supported the mid-term review of the National Gender Policy in close collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection. The policy was revised to fit Liberia's current context as it relates to the government's Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD 2018-2023) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (Cooperation Framework 2020-2021). For example, the review process led to the revision of other relevant policies (e.g., social protection, trade, and decentralization) for ensuring proper alignment with Liberia's gender commitments and priorities in achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Liberia.

In addition, and with support from the JP RWEE, a Gender Responsive Budgeting analysis of Liberia's COVID-19 Response Plan, the COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund and budget allocations and expenditure was conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. The analysis<sup>17</sup> considered that inclusivity should be a vital component of emergency response efforts, recovery, and recognition because epidemics such as COVID-19 can have a disproportionate impact on women, children, and people with disabilities.

The JP RWEE, in collaboration with the House Committee on Land, through the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, advocated with and lobbied grass-roots women, parliamentarians, the Liberia Land Authority, decentralized officials, and other relevant stakeholders in getting the Liberian Senate to finally concur with the House of Representatives to pass the engendered 'Land Rights Act'. The Land Desk in the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MGCSP) was reactivated for women's access to information on their land rights for community land management including the granting of titles to land, the case for joint titling, land distribution initiatives, and referrals in the case of abuse.

Lastly, capacity building in Gender Responsive Budgeting was provided for 6 Gender and 6 Agriculture County Coordinators including 12 extension officers from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) to enable them mainstream gender into their implementation plans, strategies, and budgets in

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<sup>17</sup> Gender Perspective of Liberia's COVID-19 Response Plan, Emergency Relief Fund (budget allocations and expenditure) - An Analytical Overview, Harold M. Aidoo, 2021.

support of promoting the economic empowerment of rural women at the local level. Also, a total of 50 gender focal points, and budget officers (27 women and 23 men) from the MGCSP, MoA, and other relevant MACs were provided capacity training in GRB. County coordinators and gender focal points from key MACs are now ensuring that gender-related issues are considered in their budgets for supporting the implementation of their respective policies and programmes.

#### **Output 4.2: Greater availability of tools and data to track progress in the economic empowerment of rural women**

The JP RWEE, with support from the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) and in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, conducted the ‘Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index’ (WEAI) survey with rural households to determine the agriculture index in 3 targeted counties. The surveys enable the JP RWEE and the Government of Liberia to analyze specific geographical areas to assist in informing potential future women’s economic empowerment programming and also government’s policy/planning. These surveys measured the empowerment, agency, and inclusion of women in the agriculture sector to identify ways to overcome obstacles and constraints.

In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection and with support from the JP RWEE, conducted a situational analysis of gender and climate-resilient agriculture in Liberia.<sup>18</sup> The report from the analysis recommended a move away from shifting cultivation to low land development in addressing the impact it has on climate change. Thus, over the years that followed, the programme invested more in low land development as part of its support for the implementation of the GoL national strategy on climate change.

In addition, the JP RWEE conducted a situational analysis of the status of Village Savings and Loan Associations and Women in Cross Border Trade with a look at the impact that the Ebola pandemic left. Reports from both analyses showed how the Ebola pandemic impacted the livelihoods of rural women engaged in VSLAs and informal cross border trade. It also recommended strategic interventions for supporting the recovery process. Thus, the JP RWEE contributed to the implementation of the Government of Liberia’s 2015 Economic Stabilization and Recovery Plan (ESRP) which was developed to set out the actions needed to respond to the Ebola epidemic and to stabilize the economy.

Lastly, the capacities of local partners, including LISGIS, MFDP, MoA, and MGCSP were strengthened in collecting, analyzing, and reporting gender-disaggregated data as of result of receiving 2 capacity building trainings in gender and data collection. The outcome of the collaboration here has resulted in providing an opportunity for assessing the effects of policy measures impacting women and men. Data that has been gathered by these partners, for example, have been crucial in evaluating and tracking the important role that women bring to the Liberian development agenda and to capture their specific contributions (e.g., land rights, decentralization, gender, and trade)

#### **Output 4.3: An enabling environment is promoted to reflect rural women’s priorities in regional and global policy processes.**

The JP RWEE also supported rural women engaged in informal cross border trade in order to address and respond to sexual harassment and abuse including extortion at border points. In addition, it has provided economic empowerment opportunities (e.g., literacy, business development, and finance) for these women to grow their respective businesses for better economic security and improved

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<sup>18</sup> Women and Climate Resilient Agriculture in Liberia: A Situational Analysis, Ministry of Agriculture, 2018.

livelihoods. Thus, it has coordinated its support to rural women informal cross border traders through the Association of Women in Cross Border Trade. Between 2015 and 2021, 4 general assemblies (attended by 320 participants), were organized and funded by the JP RWEE to unite women cross-border traders in advocating with policymakers and other key partners for safer borders and better businesses with women cross border traders. These assemblies were also aimed at giving women cross-border traders the opportunity to engage with national and regional policymakers to improve intra-African trade as it relates to the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol of Free Movement of Persons, Goods, and Services and the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS). Additionally, the programme, in collaboration with MGCSP, has been advocating with ECOWAS for the full implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol of Free Movement of Persons, Goods, and Services and the ETLS with particular focus on addressing harassment, infrastructure and transport, unclear procedures, and regulations, and the case of multiplicity of checkpoints. This also includes the elimination of customs duties and taxes of equivalent effect, removal of non-tariff barriers, and the establishment of a common customs external tariff to protect goods produced in ECOWAS member countries.

Lastly, a national rural women conference was held in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County with the Liberia National Rural Women Structure in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection for the adoption of a roadmap (e.g., JP RWEE post programme implementation) for the JP RWEE including expanded support for women's agricultural production through the structure.

## **Qualitative assessment**

**National Level:** Overall, the JP RWEE contributed to the government's strategic efforts for the promotion of gender equality through policy and programming for the economic empowerment of rural women. The programme strengthened the institutional structure of the government to implement and monitor several key policy frameworks and strategies, namely the National Gender Policy, the National Trade Policy, the Land Rights Act, the National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy, and the National Climate Change Policy and Response Strategy. This also included improving coordination between national institutions responsible for implementing activities that target and empower rural women, as well as increasing the government's commitment and attention to the issues that women and girls face in the most neglected rural areas.

**Institutional Level:** At the institutional level, the JP RWEE focused on improving the capacity of gender focal points in the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Liberia Land Authority, the Governance Commission, and the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services, particularly at the decentralized level, as well as women's civil society organizations and the private sector (Orange Liberia).

The JP RWEE provided support to the MGCSP and MoA in terms of institutional capacity building, focusing on increasing their field presence in two regions, providing additional coaching, and mentoring to their county-level and district-level civil servants, and their provision on extension and advisory services to smallholder farmers. This support not only strengthened the presence of the MoA and the MGCSP across Liberia, but improved its functions to support coordination, monitoring, and gender mainstreaming at the decentralized level. In addition, logistical support (e.g., vehicles and motorbikes) was provided to the MGCSP and MoA to further strengthen monitoring and supervision at the county, district, and community levels.

Overall, the JP RWEE contributed to the achievement of the Government of Liberia's gender equality goals within its Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD 2018-2023). The programme's achievements also made contributions to the results of Outcome 1: Human Development and Essential Social Services, and 2: Sustainable Economic Development within the context of the 'Cooperation framework'. The current Cooperation Framework for Liberia guides the entire programme cycle, driving planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of collective UN support for achieving the 2030 Agenda. It determines and reflects the UN development system's contributions in the country and shapes the configuration of UN assets required inside and outside the country.

The lessons learned from the JP RWEE management, coordination mechanisms, and joint monitoring approaches provided inputs and important lessons learned for the UN in Liberia as it developed the 'Cooperative Framework' and other joint programmes. In particular, the strategies and lessons learned from the approaches to rural women's economic empowerment comprise most of the economic interventions for women and girls in the 'Cooperation Framework'. The JP RWEE provided a structure for enhanced collaboration, particularly by UN Women, FAO, and WFP, on the economic empowerment of rural women and the lessons learned have been carried forward by the agencies.

The programme also fostered strategic partnerships with other UN agencies, key MACs, civil society, and the private sector to maximize the programme's holistic approach. Beyond the four participating agencies there was collaboration with UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF for building synergies with ongoing programmes and projects related to the reduction in HIV/AIDS and SGBV prevalence; climate change mitigation; SRH education and services; and secondary education support including the development of training curricula.

The JP RWEE identified several key cross-cutting issues (e.g. HIV/AIDS and SGBV prevalence in rural areas, and inadequate access to SRH education and services for rural women and girls) from its inception. Hence, a flexible approach to implementation provided the opportunity to adapt interventions related to addressing these issues, specifically in Montserrado, Margibi, and Grand Bassa including cross border communities in Maryland and River Gee Counties. The programme conducted awareness-raising activities in targeted communities through community dialogues, radio, and town hall meetings with support from Gender County Coordinators, a host of CSOs, and by building synergies with ongoing programmes and projects addressing the same issues at country level. Women and young women beneficiaries now understand how to practice safe sex, reduce unplanned pregnancies and prevent themselves from contracting sexually transmitted infections.

During the JP RWEE implementation, both the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection and the Ministry of Agriculture served as the lead government ministries on the National Steering Committee (NSC). The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were also engaged during the delivery of activities in Liberia. At the levels of government agencies and commissions, the Cooperative Development Agency, Environmental Protection Agency, the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Services, the Liberia Land Authority, and the Liberia Chamber of Commerce all played a crucial role during implementation as per their respective mandates. The collaboration with the government has been mainly based on strengthening monitoring and supervision of activities including their participation in the NSC where decisions have been made on the delivery of the JP RWEE.

The partnership with the government has ensured increased national ownership and recognition of the JP RWEE in Liberia. Furthermore, the government, in collaboration with the UN System, has adapted several good practices and lessons learned from the JP RWEE when developing new programmes and projects. For example, the European Union-funded and the Government-led Liberia Spotlight Initiative

on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls adapted the JP RWEE business skills and access to finance training curricula for capacity building with female traditional leaders that have been engaged in Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

A strong partnership was built with civil society through enhancing the technical knowledge and skills of women-based Civil Society Organizations for delivering on key gender commitments and ensuring CSOs' stronger linkage with the women's movement in the promotion of gender equality and rural women's empowerment. Several CSOs from civil society served as key implementing partners on delivering training, awareness-raising, and advocacy-level work during the JP RWEE implementation.

Private sector engagement proved to be extremely vital for the sustainability of the gains made by the JP RWEE. For example, strategic partnerships were fostered with Coca-Cola Liberia for the creation of women-owned businesses through the provision of capacity building in business development and management skills, and start-up capital. Partnership with Orange Liberia created employment opportunities, characterized as decent work, for women as Orange Money Agents including support for infrastructure and ICTs through the provision of Orange Money kiosks and Orange Money phones. In addition, the JP RWEE was able to build a partnership with the private sector at the global level, namely Alibaba Foundation, Innovation Norway, and Orange Foundation. These partnerships are promoting access to information, finance, and markets; developing new and leveraging existing digital solutions to improve resilience to natural disasters; and establishing women's digital centers and digital schools in JP RWEE targeted counties.

Additional in-kind support was gained outside of the MPTF funds for activities linked to capacity-building training in literacy, numeracy, business skills, climate-smart agriculture techniques, ICTs, mobile banking, and access to finance through the establishment of VSLAs. In addition, the in-kind contribution from Coca-Cola Liberia and Orange Liberia for work on business development and the creation of employment opportunities respectively were provided.

UN coordination has been further strengthened by encouraging joint mobilization, joint recruitment, joint beneficiary targeting, joint monitoring, and overall 'Delivering as One'.

ii) **Indicator Based Performance Assessment**

	<b><u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets</b>	<b>Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)</b>	<b>Source of Verification</b>
<b>Outcome 1: Rural women have improved food and nutrition security</b>			
<p><b>Indicator 1.1:</b> Increase of agricultural production of women beneficiaries  <b>Baseline:</b> 19% of women beneficiaries  <b>Planned Target:</b> 65% of women beneficiaries</p>	<p>67% average increase in agriculture production:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 73% increase for rice production</li> <li>- 68% increase for cassava production</li> <li>- 60% increase for vegetable production</li> </ul>	<p>Exceeded planned target due to very productive farming seasons during the reporting year including</p>	<p>Reports from MoA and MGCSF; Reports from FAO's crop assessments; JP RWEE's progress reports</p>
<p><b>Indicator 1.2:</b> Evidence of improvement of rural women dietary diversity and consumption patterns  <b>Baseline:</b> 0  <b>Planned Target:</b> Improvement of dietary diversity and consumption patterns of 16,000 women and 1,500 men beneficiaries</p>	<p>There is improvement of nutritional status<sup>19</sup> for 13,074 women and 1,688 young men beneficiaries who are regularly consuming vegetables, starchy food (e.g., breads, cereals, rice), and protein (e.g., poultry products, etc.). The JP RWEE managed to achieve at least the Minimum Dietary Diversity (MDD) evidenced by beneficiaries' consumption of four or more food groups.</p>	<p>Target achieved</p>	

<sup>19</sup> Improvement in nutritional status over the reporting period is based on observation reports from Moa extension officers' assessment missions to project communities and not where the value of each food group by its weight is multiplied and the weighted food group scores summed to obtain the FCS.

<p><b>Indicator 1.2.a:</b> Percentage of rural women experiencing dietary diversity for improved nutrition <b>Baseline:</b> 73.5% of rural women beneficiaries <b>Planned Target:</b> 85% of rural women beneficiaries</p> <p><b>Indicator 1.2.b:</b> Number of rural women experiencing dietary diversity for improved nutrition <b>Baseline:</b> 11,390 rural women <b>Planned Target:</b> 14,164 rural women</p>	<p>88% of rural women are consuming food from four or more of the food groups for dietary diversity and their improved nutrition security.</p> <p>More than 14,164 rural women and their households are experiencing dietary diversity evidenced by their regular consumption of vegetables, starchy food, and protein, etc. in targeted communities across Maryland, River Gee, Sinoe, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties</p>	<p>Target achieved</p> <p>Target achieved</p>	
<p><b>Output 1.1: Rural women have increased access to resources, assets, and services critical for their food and nutrition security</b></p>			
<p><b>Indicator 1.1.1:</b> Number of rural women’s cooperatives accessing credit <b>Baseline:</b> 0 <b>Planned Target:</b> 25 women-led agricultural cooperatives</p> <p><b>Indicator 1.1.2</b> Number of rural women accessing integrated services <b>Baseline:</b> Zero beneficiaries <b>Planned Target:</b> 11,940 women beneficiaries</p>	<p>17 women-led agricultural cooperatives comprising of 3,145 women beneficiaries have accessed more than US\$ 300,000 in credit through VSLAs and Orange Money</p> <p>14,762 beneficiaries (13,074 women; 1,688 men) are actively engaged in nutrition-sensitive and climate smart agriculture practices because of capacity development in nutrition-sensitive and climate smart agriculture including extension and advisory services.</p>	<p>Planned targets partially achieved due to the COVID-19 national lockdown.</p> <p>Target overachieved</p>	<p>Reports from VSLAs and the Orange Money Team; Copies of VSLAs Records; Programme’s progress reports; MoA/MGCSP County Progress Reports</p>

<p><b>Indicator 1.1.3:</b> Number of rural women utilizing improved production techniques  <b>Baseline:</b> 0 beneficiaries  <b>Planned Target:</b> 11,940 women beneficiaries</p>	<p>They are also sharing land and other resources to better meet their operations' needs and are working to maintain a system of healthful production, over time.</p>	<p>Target achieved</p>	
<p><b>Indicator 1.1.4:</b> Number of farming groups with the capacity to better organize themselves and practice nutrition-sensitive agriculture  <b>Baseline (cumulative):</b> 0  <b>Planned Target (cumulative):</b> 18 farming groups comprising 2,000 women beneficiaries</p>	<p>The leadership of 18 farming groups, comprising of 1,966 women received capacity building on organizational development and leadership skills and are ensuring nutrition-sensitive agriculture. They are better managing and leading their respective farming groups.</p>	<p>Target achieved</p>	
<p><b>Indicator 1.1.5:</b> Number of women and men accessing WFP's P4P programme / market opportunities for access to market opportunities  <b>Baseline (cumulative):</b> 2,700 (2,000 women and 700 men)  <b>Planned Target (cumulative):</b> 900 (800 women and 100 men)</p>	<p>The programme linked over 1,966 women beneficiaries to markets within the framework of WFP's P4P programme and other market opportunities (e.g., access to two market stalls in Margibi and Maryland counties and the linkage of JP RWEE producers with local traders, restaurants, hotels, etc.) and to the rice and cassava value chains development for value-addition and access to markets and information through extension and advisory services.</p>	<p>Target achieved</p>	

<p><b>Indicator 1.1.6:</b> Number of rural women benefitting from the use of high-quality seeds, tools, and machineries for increased production  <b>Baseline:</b> 3,193 rural women  <b>Planned Target:</b> 11,000 (10,000 women and 1,000 men)</p> <p><b>Indicator 1.1.7:</b> Number of rural women trained in organizational development and loans management (issuance, repayment, and food commodity management)  <b>Baseline:</b> 7,926  <b>Planned Target:</b> 500 women impacted by COVID-19 response</p> <p><b>Indicator 1.1.8:</b> Number of rural women trained in in harvesting, handling, processing preserving and packaging assorted vegetables  <b>Baseline:</b> 0  <b>Planned Target:</b> 240 (28 men and 212 women)</p>	<p>13,074 women and 1,688 young men beneficiaries were provided access to critical farming inputs such as high-quality seeds and tools including labor-saving technologies.</p> <p>1,966 women from 18 farming groups, received capacity building training in organizational development and loans management (e.g., issuance, repayment, and food commodity management).</p> <p>Capacity building trainings was provided to 240 (212 women and 28 men) beneficiaries in the harvesting, handling, processing, preserving, and packaging of greens, sweet potatoes, cabbage, etc.</p>	<p>Target achieved</p> <p>Target achieved</p> <p>Target achieved</p>	
<p><b>Output 1.2: Rural women have greater capacity to enhance and control local food security reserves</b></p>			
<p><b>Indicator 1.2.1</b> Number of sustainable women led and managed local food security reserves  <b>Baseline:</b> 0  <b>Planned Target:</b> 7</p>	<p>7 women-led community grain reserves constructed to enhance and control production of 13,074 women and 1,688 young men beneficiaries who have benefitted from the provision of assorted food</p>	<p>Target achieved</p>	<p>Programme’s progress reports; Reports from WFP and FAO; FAO activity reports</p>

<p><b>Indicator 1.2.2:</b> Number of rural women accessing and utilizing innovative food processing units  <b>Baseline:</b> 0 beneficiaries  <b>Planned Target:</b> 945 beneficiaries (854 women and 91 men)</p>	<p>commodity, distributed as labor incentives.</p> <p>Overall, 13,074 women beneficiaries and 1,688 men beneficiaries from 7 innovative food processing units are accessing and using motorized cassava graters for adding value to cassava and rice (e.g., farina production; rice flour).</p> <p>The JP RWEE also provided capacity-building training for 14,762 beneficiaries (13,074 women; 1,688 men) in food processing and storage, using innovative, productivity enhancing, and cultural-sensitive technologies for strengthening women and men beneficiaries' productive capacities including: the use of agricultural technologies, improved crop planting, cultivation, harvesting, preservation and packaging, nutrition-sensitive, and climate-smart agriculture.</p> <p>Food processing units for the poultry and the dryers for vegetables, etc. were procured. In addition, 2 of 7 CGRs are storing 4 Mt of paddy rice which were</p>	<p>Exceeded planned target by building synergies with other programmes and projects implemented by the PUNOs.</p>	
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<p><b>Indicator 1.2.3:</b> Number of rural women who get contracts with WFP to support Home Grown School feeding and P4P  <b>Baseline:</b> 0 beneficiaries  <b>Planned Target:</b> 206 beneficiaries</p>	<p>reported as increase in yield in Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties.</p> <p>600 smallholder farmers (women 509 / men 91) are accessing food processing facilities in Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties</p> <p>More than 455 women-led associations (e.g., VSLAs) were formed for enhancing women’s capacities to jointly manage productive assets and for delivering effective extension and advisory services for their members in CGRs.</p> <p>The programme adapted the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach (a participatory method based on people-centered learning to create an environment conducive to learning) for more than 11,394 women beneficiaries in targeted communities. This provided them the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience in a risk-free setting.</p> <p>Target was partially achieved for Indicator 1.2.3. However, on access to markets, over 221 women beneficiaries were able to sign contracts with buyers of rice and</p>	<p>Partially achieved planned target due to the COVID-19 national lockdown.</p>	
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	cassava products outside contracts with WFP.		
<b>Outcome 2: Rural women have increased income to secure their livelihoods</b>			
<p><b>Indicator 2.1.1:</b> Income generated by rural women’s cooperatives from their sales to WFP and other markets  <b>Baseline:</b> 0  <b>Planned Target:</b> US\$ 350,000.00</p>	<p>The total cumulative monetary number of sales (non P4P) made by JP RWEE groups was US\$ 358,397.54 over the reporting period.</p>	<p>Exceeded planned target by building synergies with other programmes and projects implemented by the PUNOs.</p>	<p>Reports from WFP, FAO, and UN Women; Reports from the LNRWS, LMA, and AWICBT; JP RWEE progress report</p>
<p><b>Indicator 2.1.2:</b> Evidence of better quality of life and status of rural women  <b>Baseline:</b> 0  <b>Planned Target:</b> Better quality of life and status with 16,000 women beneficiaries</p>	<p>17,832 beneficiaries (16,144 women and 1,688 men) are demonstrating improved food and nutrition security, increased economic security and improved livelihoods, and are participating in decision making at the household and community levels.</p>	<p>Exceeded planned target by building synergies with other programmes and projects implemented by the PUNOs.</p>	
<p><b>Indicator 2.2.3:</b> Number of women and men accessing WFP’s P4P programme / market opportunities for access to market opportunities  <b>Baseline:</b> 2,700 (F: 2,000 &amp; M: 700)  <b>Planned Target:</b> 900 (F: 800 &amp; M: 100)</p>	<p>1,966 women beneficiaries accessing markets within the framework of WFP’s P4P programme and other market opportunities (e.g., access to two market stalls in Margibi and Maryland counties and the linkage of JP RWEE producers with local traders, restaurants, hotels, etc.) and to the rice and cassava value chains development for value-addition and access to markets and information</p>	<p>Exceeded planned target by building synergies with other programmes and projects implemented by the PUNOs.</p>	

	<p>through extension and advisory services.</p> <p>Overall, women and men beneficiaries have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.</p>		
<p><b>Output 2.1: Rural women have enhanced entrepreneurship skills and value chains to access markets for their products</b></p>			
<p><b>Indicator 2.1.1</b> Number of rural women’s cooperatives procuring agricultural products and home-grown school meals through WFP programmes  <b>Baseline (cumulative):</b> Zero  <b>Planned Target (cumulative):</b> 25 women-led agricultural cooperatives</p>	<p>17 women-led agricultural cooperatives comprising of 3,145 women beneficiaries are procuring agricultural products through WFP and other programmes in targeted counties.</p>	<p>Partially achieved for cooperatives procuring agricultural products due to the COVID-19 national lockdown.</p>	<p>Reports from WFP, FAO, and UN Women; Programme’s progress reports</p>
<p><b>Indicator 2.1.2</b> Number of women beneficiaries participating in and completing literacy, numeracy, and business development skills classes  <b>Baseline:</b> 0  <b>Planned Target:</b> 16,000 women</p>	<p>16,144 women beneficiaries received training in literacy and numeracy skills; business development and financial management skills; loan management skills, and access to markets amongst others.</p>	<p>Exceeded planned target by building synergies with other programmes and projects on skills building.</p>	
<p><b>Indicator 2.1.3</b> Number of women beneficiaries engaged in value chains development to access markets for their products  <b>Baseline:</b> 0</p>	<p>1,966 women beneficiaries accessing markets within the framework of WFP’s P4P programme and other market opportunities (e.g., access to two market stalls and the linkage of JP</p>	<p>Exceeded planned target by building synergies with other programmes and projects implemented by the PUNOs.</p>	

<p><b>Planned Target:</b> At least 10,000 women beneficiaries</p>	<p>RWEE producers with customers) and to the rice and cassava value chains development for value-addition and access to markets and information through extension and advisory services.</p>		
<p><b>Output 2.2: Rural women have increased access to decent wage employment opportunities</b></p>			
<p><b>Indicator 2.2.1:</b> Number of women beneficiaries accessing decent wage <b>Baseline:</b> 0 <b>Planned Target:</b> At least 1,500 women beneficiaries</p>	<p>3,202 women beneficiaries are earning a decent wage: inclusive of 70 women benefiting from private sector partnership as Orange Money Agents in Montserrado, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties; 3,132 women are generating income from the operations of small and medium enterprises owned by them in Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Bassa, Maryland, River Gee, and Sinoe Counties.</p>	<p>Exceeded planned target by building synergies with other programmes and projects implemented by the PUNOs.</p>	<p>Reports from UN Women and Orange Liberia; SMS Orange Money Statements; Reports from the LNRWS, LMA, and AWICBT; Programme's progress reports</p>
<p><b>Outcome 3: Rural women have enhanced leadership and participation in their communities and in rural institutions, and in shaping laws, policies and programmes</b></p>			
<p><b>Indicator 3.3.1:</b> Proportion of rural women elected representatives in rural councils in JP RWEE counties <b>Baseline:</b> 7.54% (0.075) <b>Planned Target:</b> 13.11% (0.13.11)</p>	<p>18.46% of rural women beneficiaries from Maryland, River Gee, Sinoe, Grand Bassa, Margibi, and Montserrado Counties are elected representatives in rural councils on agricultural development and natural resources management.</p>	<p>Exceeded planned target by building synergies with other programmes and projects implemented by the PUNOs.  Exceeded planned target by building synergies with other programmes and projects implemented by the PUNOs.  Exceeded planned target by building synergies with other programmes and projects implemented by the PUNOs.</p>	<p>Reports from UN Women and LLA  Programme's progress reports</p>

<p><b>Indicator 3.3.2:</b> Number of rural women who are members of land committees  <b>Baseline:</b> 1,218  <b>Planned Target:</b> 900</p>	<p>1,162 women beneficiaries are active members of land committees</p>	<p>Target achieved</p>	
<p><b>Indicator 3.3.3:</b> Number of POs led by women  <b>Baseline:</b> 13  <b>Planned Target:</b> At least 6 women-led POs</p>	<p>18 POs are led by 13 women and 5 men in targeted communities.</p>	<p>Target achieved</p>	
<p><b>Indicator 3.3.4:</b> Evidence of rural women’s empowerment in intrahousehold decision making  <b>Baseline (cumulative):</b> Zero  <b>Planned Target (cumulative):</b> 16,000 women engaged in intrahousehold decision making<sup>20</sup></p>	<p>The findings also demonstrated narrow empowerment gaps between men and women. The narrow empowerment gaps likely suggest that achieving gender parity in agriculture in these locations is quite feasible. The contributors of low empowerment scores are access to credit; household assets ownership; assets ownership, rights to assets, and daily work burden. Despite these challenges, women reported adequate empowerment scores in control over income from productive activities, and leadership in the community.</p>	<p>Target achieved</p>	

<sup>20</sup> JP RWEE Field Progress Reports

<b>Output 3.1: Rural women, including young women have enhanced confidence and leadership skills to participate in local governance</b>			
<p><b>Indicator 3.1.1</b> Number of rural girls enrolled in secondary education  <b>Baseline:</b> 0  <b>Planned Target:</b> At least 1,000 young women beneficiaries</p>	<p>1,162 young women beneficiaries received school kits (e.g., school bags, scientific calculators, geometry sets, textbooks, pens, copybooks, etc.) in project communities across Montserrado, Margibi, and Grand Bassa for their enrollment in secondary education.</p> <p>Capacity building in organizational development and leadership skills were provided for more than 14,982 women beneficiaries which also included the young women who received school kits.</p> <p>This output benefitted a total of 14,982 women and young women beneficiaries.</p>	<p>Exceeded planned target by building synergies with other programmes and projects implemented by the PUNOs.</p>	<p>Reports from UN Women; Reports from the LNRWS; Programme's progress reports</p>
<b>Output 3.2: Rural women have greater organisational capacities to form, sustain and participate into POs, cooperatives, and unions</b>			
<p><b>Indicator 3.2.1</b> Number of informal rural women's groups who join formally registered POs, cooperatives, and unions  <b>Baseline:</b> 0  <b>Planned Target:</b> 20 informal women groups</p>	<p>17 farming cooperatives are functional across targeted counties.</p> <p>Also, at least 25 informal women's groups comprising of 325 women beneficiaries joined 13 formally registered Producer Organizations. 11,394 women beneficiaries were reached.</p>	<p>Exceeded planned target by building synergies with other programmes and projects implemented by the PUNOs.</p>	<p>Reports from UN Women; Programme's progress reports</p>
<b>Output 3.3: Rural women including young women have increased capacity to engage in and influence relevant policy forums at national and regional levels</b>			

<p><b>Indicator 3.3.1</b> Extent to which rural women’s coalitions adopt common positions to influence national forums on food and nutrition security, cross border trade, land, and natural resource management, including concession agreements that affect women, etc.  <b>Baseline:</b> 3 coalitions to influencing national forums  <b>Planned Target:</b> 4 coalitions to influence national forums</p>	<p>4 key advocacy platforms (LNRWS, AWICBT, LMA, and NPHWOL) strengthened to engage in national processes as it relates to empowering women beneficiaries in agriculture for improved food and nutrition security; cross border traders increased engagement with national and regional policymakers to improve intra-African trade; and women beneficiaries' contribution to peacebuilding and conflict mitigation as it relates to the management of land, the environment, and other natural resources including concession agreements that affect women.</p> <p>4 learning exchange events organized nationally to effectively network and exchange experiences and know-how. 1 rural woman conference from the inception of the JP RWEE followed by 4 general assemblies.</p>	<p>Target achieved</p>	<p>Reports of rural women’s networks; Programme’s progress reports</p>
<p><b>Output 3.4: Rural women, including young women have enhanced awareness on their rights in a more supportive community/local environment</b></p>			
<p><b>Indicator 3.4.1:</b> Number of young women beneficiaries participating in community listening clubs  <b>Baseline:</b> 225 young women beneficiaries  <b>Planned Target:</b> 600</p>	<p>8 community listening clubs comprising of 900 young women beneficiaries were organized under 6 community peace huts in targeted counties. These structures are engaged with awareness raising on issues related to S/GBV, SEA, SRH, and HIV/AIDS at community level.</p>	<p>Overachieved planned target. This was because of demands from youth groups in project communities to engage more young women for their participation in community listeners’ clubs. Hence, the additional young women reached was made possible through building synergies with the</p>	<p>Reports from UN Women and MGCSP; Programme’s progress reports</p>

	<p>Thus, the programme supported awareness-raising activities on women's rights (e.g., S/GBV, SRH, HIV/AIDS, land, the environment, and other natural resources; etc.) including COVID-19 prevention and referral through literacy classes, community radio stations, and other forums and/or platforms (e.g., LNRWS, AWICBT, LMA, NPHWOL, etc.)The JP RWEE also provided capacity building trainings for 1,658 men with emphasis on masculinities, male and female stereotypes, and expectations surrounding gender issues. As a result, men are now challenging their own reflections about gender, stereotypes, and related expectations evidenced by them becoming male champions that are championing women as equal partners in the home and community at large. This also includes by their online commitment to <a href="#">HeForShe</a> as they are now adding their unique voice to the gender equality movement in Liberia.</p>	<p>Liberia Joint Programmes on HIV/AIDS and S/GBV.</p>	
<p><b>Outcome 4: A more gender responsive policy environment is secured for the economic empowerment of rural women</b></p>			
<p><b>Indicator 4.1.1:</b> Number [Proportion] of government budgets and donor funding allocated to programmes benefitting rural women <b>Baseline:</b></p>	<p>A US\$ 25 million in GoL to support food distribution to households in designated COVID-19 affected</p>	<p>Partially achieved due to the COVID-19 national lockdown.</p>	<p>Reports from MGCSP and LLA; Programme's progress reports</p>

<p><b>Planned Target:</b></p> <p><b>Indicator 4.1.2</b> Number of laws passed to secure rural women’s land ownership  <b>Baseline:</b> 1 (Local Governance Act)  <b>Planned Target:</b> 1</p>	<p>counties, all 6 JP RWEE targeted counties included.<sup>21</sup></p> <p>In addition, a total of US\$ 129.9 M was allocated by 6 international donors from 6 other budget</p> <p>Through strengthened advocacy and lobbying with grass-root women, parliamentarians, the Liberia Land Authority, decentralized officials, and other relevant stakeholders, the ‘Land Rights Act’ was passed by the Liberian Senate and signed into law by President George Weah on September 19, 2018. The Law strengthens rights over customary land regardless of gender and reinforces government’ commitment to advance women’s land rights, including granting of titles to land, joint titling and the equal distribution of land.</p>	<p>Target achieved</p>	
<p><b>Output 4.1: Policy makers and parliamentarians have enhanced capacities to effectively mainstream gender into land, food, agriculture, nutrition and rural employment policies, laws, and budgets</b></p>			
<p><b>Indicator 4.1.1</b> Extent to which national land, food, nutrition, agricultural and rural development policies, and laws make provisions for GEWE  <b>Baseline:</b> National Gender Policy, National Food and Nutrition Security Strategy, the Local Governance Act</p>	<p>Through strengthened advocacy with grass-root women, parliamentarians, the Liberia Land Authority, decentralized officials and other relevant stakeholders, the Liberian Senate finally concurred with the House of Representatives</p>	<p>Target achieved</p>	<p>Reports from MoA, MGCSP, and MFDP, and other relevant MACS; Programme’s progress reports</p>

<sup>21</sup> JP RWEE Funded Gender Perspective of Liberia's COVID-19 Response Plan, Emergency Relief Fund Report (budget allocations and expenditure).

<p><b>Planned Target:</b> Approval of the Land Rights Act</p>	<p>to pass the ‘Land Rights Act’ which was eventually signed into law by President George Weah on September 19, 2018. The Law strengthens rights over customary land regardless of gender and will reinforce government’ commitment to advance women’s land rights, including granting of titles to land, joint titling and the equal distribution of land.</p> <p>Capacity building in GRB was provided for 6 Gender and 6 Agriculture County Coordinators including 12 extension officers from the Ministry of Agriculture to enable them mainstream gender into their implementation plans, strategies, and budgets. The county coordinators and extension officers remain engaged with mainstreaming gender-specific activities and affirmative action, whenever women or men are in a particularly disadvantageous position.</p> <p>In addition, a total of 50 gender focal points, and budget officers (27 females; and 23 males) from the MGCSP, MoA, and other relevant MACs were provided capacity training in GRB. The gender focal points in these MACs are</p>		
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	mainstreaming gender in strategies, budgets, and implementation plans.		
<b>Output 4.2: Greater availability of tools and data to track progress in the economic empowerment of rural women</b>			
<p><b>Indicator 4.2.1:</b> Number of counties where the women’s empowerment in agriculture index is piloted  <b>Baseline (cumulative):</b> 1 (USAID WEAI report)  <b>Planned Target (cumulative):</b> 3 WEAI reports</p>	<p>The MoA in collaboration with the MGCSP, with support from the JP RWEE, conducted a situational analysis of gender and climate-resilient agriculture in Liberia. Also, the programme conducted a situational analysis of the status of Village Savings and Loan Associations and Women in Cross Border Trade with a look at the impact that the Ebola pandemic left. Lastly, the capacities of local partners, including LISGIS and MoA, and MGCSP were built in collecting, analyzing, and reporting gender-disaggregated data.</p> <p>The capacities of local partners, including LISGIS, MFDP, MoA, and MGCSP were strengthened in collecting, analyzing, and reporting gender-disaggregated data as of result of receiving 2 capacity building trainings in gender and data collection. The outcome of the collaboration here has resulted in providing an opportunity for assessing the effects of policy measures impacting women and men. Data that has been gathered by these partners, for example, have</p>	Target partially achieved	Reports of national statistical offices; Programme’s progress reports; Women and Climate Resilient Agriculture in Liberia: A Situational Analysis, Ministry of Agriculture, 2018; Situational analysis of the status of Village Savings and Loan Associations and Women in Cross Border Trade

	<p>been crucial in evaluating and tracking the important role that women bring to the Liberian development agenda and to capture their specific contributions (e.g., land rights, decentralization, gender, and trade)</p>		
<p><b>Output 4.3: An enabling environment is promoted to reflect rural women’s priorities in regional policy processes</b></p>			
<p><b>Indicator 4.3.1:</b> Number of national dialogue mechanisms on agriculture, cross border trade, rural development, and land that involve rural women’s groups  <b>Baseline:</b> 5 mechanisms (e.g., National Food Security and Nutrition Coordinating Committee, County Land Committees, County Service Centers, the Peace Committees, and the Palaver Hut  <b>Planned Target:</b> 2 mechanisms (e.g., AWICBT, LNRWS)</p>	<p>4 general assemblies, benefiting more than 320 women beneficiaries engaged in cross-border trader, were held to unite women cross-border traders for safer borders and better businesses. These assemblies were also aimed at giving women cross-border traders the opportunity to engage national and regional policymakers to improve intra-African trade as it relates to the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol of Free Movement of Persons, Goods, and Services and the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS).</p> <p>Additionally, the program in collaboration with MGCSP has been advocating with ECOWAS for the full implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol of Free Movement of Persons, Goods, and Services and the ETLs with particular focus on addressing harassment, infrastructure and</p>	<p>Partially achieved due to the COVID-19 national lockdown but with wider evidence of progress.</p>	<p>AWICBT Reports from general assemblies  LNRWS Report from conference</p>

	<p>transport, unclear procedures, and regulations, and the case of multiplicity of checkpoints. A national rural women conference was held in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County with 80 rural women leaders from the Liberia National Rural Women Structure and a host of other women in collaboration with MoA and MGCSP for the adoption of a roadmap for the JP RWEE including expanded support for women's agricultural production through the structure.</p>		
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### iii) Evaluation, Best Practices and Lessons Learned

#### Evaluation

The JP RWEE conducted several studies, assessments, and evaluations during programme implementation. These included the 2015 baseline study for the mapping and assessment of women farming groups;<sup>22</sup> the 2019, 2020, and 2021 WEAI surveys three situational analyses namely on women and climate-resilient agriculture in Liberia;<sup>23</sup> the status of women in cross border trade<sup>24</sup>; and the status of village savings and loan associations.<sup>25</sup> In addition, a 2018 mid-term assessment of the JP RWEE country programme was carried out<sup>26</sup> and a 2021 global final evaluation which included the JP RWEE Liberia.<sup>27</sup> The findings of these exercises assisted the JP RWEE in making informed decisions related to the development of strategic interventions as reflected in annual work plans. However, due to limited resources, not all recommendations were implemented during program delivery.

The outcome from the mapping and assessment of women farming groups gave the JP RWEE a better understanding of the status of farming groups and their location for mobilization and selection. In this case, 21 rural communities in Maryland, River Gee, and Sinoe Counties were mobilized with 15 selected for interventions from the inception of the JP RWEE.

Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) surveys were conducted in selected counties, namely Lofa, Bong, and Nimba Counties in 2019, 2020 and 2021. Key recommendations from the WEAI survey reports suggested that the JP RWEE needed to tailor its empowerment interventions to cash crop production because of the existing high participation of women in food crop production activities. The report mentioned that any effective cash crop intervention should include value addition activities and linkages to markets to prevent post-harvest losses and enable women to generate incomes from their farm produces. These recommendations were implemented during programme delivery. In addition, it was also recommended that the JP RWEE continue in investing in rural women's access to credit, utilizing the Village Savings and Loans (VSLA) scheme because these associations bring the additional benefit of social empowerment and group membership, which is currently at low levels across all communities. Investments in the VSLAs continued through the programme delivery. Lastly, the report suggested that further research to better understand the root causes of women's low rights over household assets was needed and that the JP RWEE should prioritize empowerment interventions that help rural women shift the use of their incomes in favor of acquiring assets which could help enhance women's autonomy, thereby reducing empowerment gaps on rights over household assets. There is increasing recognition of the need to look at climate change through a gender lens, and the JP RWEE invested in building the capacity of women smallholder farmers and youths in climate-smart agriculture practices for increased production in a changing climate.

Based on the findings from the situation analyses of women in cross border trade and village savings and loan associations, the key recommendations were to work closely with the cross-border traders' associations to enhance their voice in the decision making processes at the policy level; implement adequate infrastructure to facilitate cross border trade (CBT): roads, markets, and storage facilities; ensure that the Central Bank of Liberia should work with commercial banks to recognize VSLAs as

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<sup>22</sup> Baseline Study for the Strategic Mapping and Assessment of Women Farming Groups in Maryland, Sinoe, and River Gee Counties, SUBAH-BELLE ASSOCIATES, 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Women and Climate Resilient Agriculture in Liberia: A Situational Analysis, Ministry of Agriculture, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Report on the Status of Women in Cross Border Trade, Thomas B. Kanneh, 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Report on the Status of Women in Village Savings and Loan Associations, Thomas B. Kanneh, 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Joint Promoted on Rural Women Economic Empowerment Mid-Term Review, Hindowa B. Momoh, 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Decentralized Evaluation: Global End-term Evaluation of the JP RWEE in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda from 2014 to 2020, Mokoro, 2021.

valid institutions for receiving formal loans; and LISGIS should encourage or ensure sex-disaggregated data in ongoing and future data collection initiatives, especially as it relates to VSLAs. With women cross-border traders, the JP RWEE has supported national general assemblies which have provided the opportunity for national and sub-national leaders of the AWICBT to dialogue with policymakers on the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol of Free Movement of Persons, Goods, and Services including the ETLS. Discussions were held with the CBL to engage commercial banks so that they recognize VSLAs as valid structures for receiving credit. Lastly, the capacity of LISGIS was built to collect and report on sex-disaggregated data which it has been doing in all its studies and surveys being conducted.

The JP RWEE 2018 mid-term review assisted the JP RWEE in making informed decisions around improving joint delivery of interventions including joint targeting of beneficiaries. In addition, the review report recommended that the VSLA approach continue but with a focus on linking VSLAs to Micro Finance Institutions and the private banks for women's increased access to finance for investing in new and existing businesses. Another key area recommended was the need for the JP RWEE to adapt a climate-resilient approach to improving food and nutrition security which was then linked to a proposed UN Women, FAO, and WFP Flagship Programme Initiative on Women's Empowerment through Climate Smart Agriculture which has been identified as one of UN System's flagship for delivering on the 'Cooperation Framework'.

Lastly, the report from the 2021 global evaluation of the JP RWEE in Liberia recommended several key actions for future programming. These recommendations include, but are not limited to: expanding the business development skills and increasing outreach to other communities to include more poor marginalized and women in vulnerable situations; expanding access to finance from VSLA to micro-finance and private banks with the view to expend business ventures of rural women; continuing and expanding the capacity building in food processing and packaging for value addition; providing capacity development to gender focal points and field-level service providers to ensure effective and gender-responsive service to women in vulnerable situations.

## **Challenges**

Key challenges that significantly delayed the JP RWEE implementation included two major pandemics, namely the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in 2014/2015 and the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in 2020/2021 with both resulting in a national lockdown. The JP RWEE was not prepared for both the EVD and COVID-19 pandemics; however, the programme was better able to position itself to address the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 by aligning its priorities with the COVID-19 Emergency Food Security Plan. The latter is based on expanding cultivation, engaging in agro-processing, purchasing, and pre-positioning food stocks, and strengthening coordination in the food and nutrition security working group at the country level.

In addition, the JP RWEE was able to utilize the local Ministry of Agriculture Extension Workers and the Ministry of Gender County Coordinators, involved in the programme since the inception, to support monitoring and supervision efforts at the district and community levels during both pandemics. These extension workers and Gender County Coordinators from the two government ministries have played a key role in following up with beneficiaries at the community level and reporting to their respective ministries and the participating UN agencies.

Internal processes within the participating UN agencies proved challenging at times. For example, the bureaucracy with procurement and contracting were two key issues causing delays with implementation. However, the UN Resident Coordinator intervened in accelerating delivery by pushing the Heads of Agencies from FAO, WFP, and UN Women to deliver as planned. The

Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, also played a role here in urging the participating UN agencies to accelerate implementation processes. This was done during joint steering committee meetings.

From the onset of the JP RWEE in 2014, there were no designated focal points in the participating UN agencies but proxies. This presented a serious challenge for coordination and Delivering as One. It was only in 2016 that dedicated focal points were then fully put in place by participating agencies in coordination with the Resident Coordinator's Office to support programme implementation. Once this happened, the National Technical Advisory Committee was then fully activated. This then provided the opportunity for all key stakeholders and partners to participate fully at the technical level. The development of joint annual workplans and budgets including joint mobilization, targeting, and selection of beneficiaries now made it easier for working with the government through the MGCSP and MoA. This also included the strategic partnerships with civil society and private sector that ensued over the years which also contributed to key achievements, best practices, lessons learned, and opportunities.

It is also important to note here that the change in national government became a challenge in moving activities forward as the new government appointees required a thorough orientation before giving their endorsement for the implementation of project activities at the national and sub-national levels. In addition, there was the case of change in senior management and technicians which also included change in JP RWEE focal points from WFP and FAO including the lead UN agency, UN Women. To address the case of transition which impacted the delivery of the JP RWEE, the TAC began the process of debriefing new Government ministers and programme technicians including the UN System. The goal here was to ensure that newly appointed ministers, UN Country Representatives, and programme technicians had better knowledge and understanding of the programme.

Lastly, heavy rains and bad roads, particularly in the southeast of Liberia, delayed the delivery of farming inputs and training supplies including the delivery of trainings. To address this issue, the JP RWEE attempted to implement most of its activities during the dry season.

## **Lessons Learned and Best Practices**

The JP RWEE's collaboration with the Liberia Land Authority (LLA) and the CSOs Working Group on Land Rights intensified in the wake of the partner's technical assistance in developing a standardized message for nationwide dissemination of the new Land Law. This resulted in a harmonized approach to promoting women's land rights at the national and sub-national levels. Working with rural women on their land rights (through mainstreaming gender in the new land law<sup>28</sup>, supporting advocacy and awareness raising with key stakeholders, partners, and the grassroots women) has proven to be successful in the implementation of the Law in Liberia. About 87%<sup>29</sup> of women beneficiaries have been exercising their land rights at the community level in targeted counties under the programme. A practical example is that rural women are requesting that their names are included on land deeds or land certificates to show joint ownership of land with their husbands.

The JP RWEE was successful in bringing women into the digital space which hitherto was reserved mainly for men in the targeted communities. Utilizing innovative approaches towards gaining new skills in digital literacy and mobile banking, competences, and organizational capacities enabled women beneficiaries to lead and actively participate in more social and economic activities and

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<sup>28</sup> Liberia Land Rights Act. Signed into Law on September 19, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Based on reports from field visits conducted in Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Bassa, Maryland, River Gee, and Sinoe Counties.

provided them with access to decent work. These new skills enhanced their decision-making roles and enabled them to earn increased respect within and outside their households and communities.

The successful engagement with men as gender advocates has assisted in achieving transformative changes against stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination and inequality in Liberia. For example, two strategic approaches here have been through awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns (e.g., UN Women's HeForShe and that of participatory community dialogues facilitated by WFP in collaboration with FAO and UN Women). Men and boys have remained engaged directly and indirectly throughout the programme's implementation. Working with men and boys has included a process of strategic dialogues and consultations during community entry, the HeForShe Campaign awareness raising in communities, use of local male facilitators to support the facilitation of training at the community level, and the linking of other programming areas (e.g., men as male champions for women's economic empowerment and on ending violence against women).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic provided an insight into the importance of crisis preparedness and contingency planning. The programme's collaboration with the Government's National COVID-19 Response represented an important alignment with national coordination mechanisms. Furthermore, the national lockdown had imposed hardship on the ability of households to access nutritious food due to a lack of access to markets. As a result of this, some beneficiaries sought odd jobs while others left farming to engage in other income generating activities, although some invested their time and energy in homegrown vegetables for consumption. The homegrown gardens cultivated under the programme enabled women and their families to have access to nutritious food and maintain a healthy diet. The grain reserves also contributed to beneficiary resilience during this time.

One of the good practices observed during the national lockdown due to COVID-19 was the remote supervision of the programme through mobile phone calls and social media (e.g., Facebook, Messenger, and WhatsApp) to maintain communication with beneficiaries at the household and community levels. Nonetheless, there were connectivity issues at times and not all women had access to the technology which was a challenge.

The use of community grain reserves which had been developed under the programme proved to be a key coping strategy during the COVID-19 crisis for the women beneficiaries. Members of the grain reserves took loans from their stock reserves and were able to repay them without traveling out of their communities which would have exposed them to the virus. The reserves provided the farmers with the capacity to overcome unusually high rainfall and high temperatures which affected agricultural production, as well as withstand the impact of COVID-19, while also undertaking value addition to food products.

Increased national ownership of the JP RWEE is being achieved through working closely with local government in the implementation of project activities (i.e. Ministry of Education with the Literacy programme, Ministry of Commerce and Industry with the Business skills programme, the Micro Finance Unit at the Central Bank of Liberia with the access to finance programme through VSLAs including the Ministry of Agriculture with nutrition-sensitive and climate-resilient agriculture for rural women farmers), this also includes working closely with civil society and the private sector.

#### iv) A Specific Story

**Esther Forkpah, Age 36**  
**Soul Clinic Market, Montserrado County**  
**Republic of Liberia**

##### **A Success Story of an Orange Mobile Money Agent**

Ms. Esther Forkpah, a mother of one from rural Montserrado, had been struggling with a Phone Charging Booth business which she ran for more than three years without realizing any substantial profit. She started the business with LD\$20,000.00 which is equivalent to US\$ 100.00. She didn't know how to really manage and operate the business, but she just took on the adventure to make a living. Life for Esther was difficult because she also had to take care of her child and support her parents who were depending on her for their livelihood. One of the major challenges she faced was being able to pay her rent and school fees for her child.

In 2019, EduCARE Liberia in partnership with the Joint Programme on Rural Women Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE) and ORANGE GSM Liberia began to build the capacity of local market women in business development and financial literacy skills in three counties, namely rural Montserrado, Grand Bassa and Margibi. Esther was selected to participate in the programme and then benefitted from an employment opportunity with Orange GSM Liberia as an Orange Money Agent (mobile money agent). This proved to be a turnaround opportunity for her. Having received the Orange Money training, startup capital, and a mobile money kiosk provided through the partnership with the private sector, her life changed for the better. Her work as an Orange Money Agent has paid off as her mobile money business is now worth an estimated US\$ 1,500 with a turnover of about US\$ 400 per week. She now earns a decent wage which is helping her and her family.

As a result of her regular income, she has been able to make home improvements, pay school fees and rent, established small businesses for her siblings, and has even become a decision-maker in her household. Her business size has increased thus enabling her to earn more profits from the mobile money transfer transactions, charging phones, selling data, and forex exchange operations. In order to increase profitability, the business now has a bank account where profits are saved to cover future investments and needs.

*"I couldn't believe it, it came as a surprise, school fees are paid, house rents are paid and my business has improved as well!"* exclaims Esther.



**Ma Evon Flomo, Age 59**  
**Margibi County, Liberia**

### **A Success Story of a Rural Woman Gardener**

*“Before my participation in the JP RWEE, I was a struggling gardener in Worhn Town with no access to storage for preserving my produce, especially for pepper, bitterballs, and tomatoes. I had no knowledge or skills in storing nor preserving the produce from my garden. So, most times they would get rotten, and I would lose money and my effort would go in vain.*

*After UN Women, FAO, and WFP met with us in a meeting in my town, it was agreed that the JP RWEE would consider constructing a storage house and would train us the women in different areas like food preservation and the use of machineries to process rice and cassava produce. Within 3 months, the storage house was constructed and equipped. About a month later, I received training in food preservation which made me to better understand how to preserve my perishable produce for selling in the local market. Within two months after receiving this training, I started selling powder pepper and pepper sauce including powder bitterballs and tomatoes.*

*I had the knowledge and skills on preserving my produce, but I had no money. So, I took a loan amounting to LD\$ 8,000.00 (US\$ 47.00 @ 10% interest) from my local VSLA, established by the JP RWEE, to invest in my garden project. After the sale of my produce, I was able to pay back the loan with interest, making it a total of LD\$ 8,800.00 (US\$ 52.00) in payback. I had generated a total of LD\$ 24,700.00 (US\$ 145.29), getting a profit of LD\$ 15,900.00 (US\$ 93.53) from my garden project.” I did not need to worry anymore about my produce spoiling. Customers came and bought my produce, and I have been able to get more money which I am investing in my Village Savings and Loan Association for growing the business.*

*Because I now make my own money, I have become more independent and always participate in decision making in my house and in my community. I now help my husband to pay our children’s school fees which has helped reduce the burden on the family”.*