

**“Accelerating Progress toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women
(RWEE)”**

**Multi-Partner Trust Fund
Terms of Reference**

UN WOMEN, FAO, IFAD, WFP

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Introduction
 - II. Programme Outline
 - 1. Purpose
 - 2. Scope
 - 3. Partners
 - 4. Strategies
 - III. RWEE Fund Architecture
 - 5. RWEE Fund Administration
 - 6. Contributions to the RWEE
 - 7. Eligibility for RWEE funding
 - 8. Utilization of the RWEE Fund
 - 9. Governance Arrangements
 - a) International Steering Committee
 - b) International Technical Advisory Group
 - c) Programme Management Unit
 - d) National Steering Committee
 - e) National Project Guidance and Coordination Mechanism
 - f) Lead Agencies
 - g) The Administrative Agent
 - IV. Monitoring and Evaluation
 - V. Audit
 - VI. Reporting, transparency and accountability
 - VII. Public Disclosure
 - VIII. Other Matters
-

I. Introduction

Women are central to the development of rural areas and to national economies: they account for a significant proportion of the agricultural labour force, play a key role in food production, especially in subsistence farming and perform most of the unpaid care work in rural areas. However, rural women and girls have restricted access to productive resources, such as land, agricultural inputs, finance and credit, extension services and technology, which in turn limits the efficiency of the agricultural sector. They face more difficulty than men in gaining access to public services, social protection, decent employment opportunities and local and national markets and institutions, due to cultural norms and security issues. Unpaid care work further hampers rural women's ability to take advantage of on and off farm employment and market opportunities in the agricultural sector. Within this context, UN Women, FAO, IFAD and WFP have agreed to spearhead a more comprehensive UN system response in support of rural women's economic empowerment through joint actions.

The Rural Women's Rural Economic Empowerment (RWEE) five year joint programme will support a results-oriented collaborative effort among FAO, IFAD, WFP and UN Women to promote the economic empowerment of rural women. Each agency brings a distinct comparative advantage to this subject: FAO's specialist technical knowledge and policy assistance on agriculture and food security, IFAD's co-financing of rural investment programmes and strong presence in the rural areas, WFP's food assistance innovations and UN Women's technical knowledge on women's economic empowerment, its strong linkage with the women's movement, and its leadership for gender equality and women's empowerment within the UN System. This is to respond to the diversity of issues constraining rural women's economic empowerment which go beyond the mandate of any individual UN entity to tackle alone. By bringing together their know-how, resources, experiences and constituencies, the four entities will have the potential to greatly enhance the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of their work on rural women's economic empowerment. The RWEE will link the normative and operational work of the four entities to foster a comprehensive approach for the economic empowerment of rural women, as described in the duly signed RWEE Programme Document.

The RWEE programme will be implemented in: Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda. Each country will define its specific detailed programme implementation plan based on the local context, in partnership with Government and other national stakeholders and in line with Government priorities.

II. Programme Outline

1. Purpose: This RWEE is aimed at economically empowering rural women in the seven selected and above-mentioned countries. Together, the coalition between UN Women, FAO, IFAD and WFP is expected to generate synergies that capitalize on each agency's mandate, comparative advantage and institutional strength to generate more lasting and wider scale improvements in the livelihoods and rights of rural women, including young women.

2. Scope: The programme's goal is to secure rural women's livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development and the post MDGs +15. The programme is articulated around four outcomes:

- a. Outcome 1 on rural women's improved food and nutrition security aims at increasing the productive potential of women smallholder farmers through their access to and control over productive resources and services critical to food security and nutrition. It also addresses their social protection, and enhanced control and management of local food security reserves.
- b. Outcome 2 on rural women's increased income to sustain their livelihoods focuses on creating, supporting and developing rural women-led enterprises, supporting women's role along value chains, enhancing their income opportunities and promoting their linkages to high value markets. It will support women-led associations and small scale businesses in overcoming their supply side constraints so that they can take full advantage of opportunities offered by the market.
- c. Outcome 3 on rural women's enhanced leadership and participation in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies and programmes promotes their agency in rural producer organizations, cooperatives and unions and in local governance. Actions under this outcome area will also strengthen rural women's voice and influence in key policy processes.
- d. Outcome 4 on more gender responsive policy environment for the economic empowerment of rural women catalyzes legislative and policy reforms for the effective enforcement of rural women's land rights and their access to decent wage employment, social protection, and infrastructure. It involves advocating with governments, parliaments and other relevant stakeholders to deliver greater development outcomes to rural women, including in the framework of Rio +20 and Post MDG +2015.

3. Partners: The programme implementation involves a range of partners as indicated in the RWEE Programme Document. The key partners include:

a. The implementing partners include:

- Rural women cooperatives, youth groups, POs, unions or groups which may be organized by local areas or by crop;
- Nation-wide POs and unions;
- The main regional rural women's networks. Ministries of agriculture and rural development, gender/women's affairs, youth land, employment, environment and other relevant ministries and institution;
- NGOs and CSOs working with rural women;
- Other UN agencies interested in the programme;
- National statistical offices.

b. The strategic partners include:

- UN in general
 - Regional intergovernmental organizations and Regional Economic Communities as they develop regional and sub-regional policies and programmes on agriculture, rural development and land;
 - Financial institutions, such as regional, national or local banks that could be sensitized to develop special lending products for rural women to support rural women's production and marketing systems.
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- Multilateral partners. The ‘Contact Group for Rural Women’ established by the Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations based in New York and the Informal Network of Women Permanent Representatives based in Rome could play a key role in leveraging political and financial support for the programme.

4. Strategy

The RWEE overall strategy will comprise the following components as further detailed in the Joint Programme Document hereby attached as Annex 1.

- Accountability Strategy
- Capacity development strategy
- Combination of quick wins and medium/long term results
- Replicating, up-scaling and expanding successful and innovative models on rural women’s economic empowerment
- Tailor made approach for programme design and implementation in each country
Positioning the joint programme in UN interagency Coordination processes, such as UNDAF, existing joint programmes, One UN and other coordination mechanisms.
Efforts will be made to build support for the programme within the UN country teams and to link it with existing relevant joint programmes.
- Fundraising Strategies

III. RWEE Fund Architecture

1. Administration of the MPTF

The Participating Organizations of the RWEE Fund have appointed UNDP to act, through its MPTF Office, as the Administrative Agent (AA) for the WFEE in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in this TOR and further specified in the Memorandum of Understanding entered between the AA and the Participating Organizations. UNDP’s accountability as the Administrative Agent is set out in the policy “UNDP’s Accountability when acting as Administrative Agent in MPTFs and/or UN Joint Programmes using the pass-through fund management modality.” (see <http://www.undp.org/mdtf/docs/UNDP-AA-guidelines.pdf>). UNDP performs the AA functions in accordance with the UNDG-approved “[Protocol on the Administrative Agent for Multi Donor Trust Funds and Joint Programmes, and One UN Funds](#)”. The MPTF Office will charge a one time fee of 1 per cent for fund administration and fiduciary responsibilities.

2. Contributions to the MPTF

The RWEE FUND International Steering Committee will be set to oversee the allocation of funds mobilized at international level. National Steering Committees will be set up in each country covered by the RWEE to oversee the allocation of funds to the different components of the programme. Contributions to the RWEE FUND may be accepted from governments of Member States of the United Nations or from intergovernmental or non-governmental organisations, or from private sources and philanthropic organizations. Acceptance of funds from the private sector will be guided by criteria stipulated in the UN system-wide guidelines on cooperation between the UN and Business Community (the UN Secretary General’s guidelines: <http://www.un.org/partners/business/otherpages/guide.htm>). Contributions may be accepted in fully convertible currency and shall be deposited in the bank accounts designated by UNDP. The

value of a contribution-payment, if made in other than United States dollars, shall be determined by applying the United Nations operational rate of exchange in effect on the date of payment.

In support of the overarching aim of MPTFs, and to ensure maximum flexibility and coordination, a guiding principle for resource mobilization would be that donors are encouraged to contribute with multi-year pooled/non-earmarked resources. However, if this is not possible, requests for earmarking for country level or specific programme component areas will be considered by the International and National Steering Committees.

3. Eligibility for MPTF funding

Participating UN Organizations at the national level will be invited to develop Projects/Programme proposals with a preference for Joint Programmes.

Draft Project/Joint Programme proposal will be submitted to the National Project Guidance and Coordination Mechanism for review to ensure alignment with the guidelines and standards. If the proposal meets the standard guidelines, it will be forwarded to the National Steering Committee for technical and substantive review. The National Steering Committee may also seek technical comments on the draft document from external partners and recognized experts in the field.

On receipt of the National Steering Committee's approval of a Project/Joint Programme and a copy of the signed Project/Joint Programme document accompanied by the budget, the MPTF Office, acting as AA, will transfer the approved funds directly to each of the Participating UN Organization(s).

4. Utilization of the MPTF

1. Each Participating UN Organization will establish a separate ledger account under its financial regulations and rules for the receipt and administration of the funds disbursed to it by the Administrative Agent from the Fund Account. That separate ledger account will be administered by each Participating UN Organization in accordance with its own regulations, rules, directives and procedures, including those relating to interest. That separate ledger account will be subject exclusively to the internal and external auditing procedures laid down in the financial regulations, rules, directives and procedures applicable to the Participating UN Organization concerned.

2. The Participating UN Organizations will not make any commitments above the approved budget in the approved programmatic document, as amended from time to time by the Steering Committee. If there is a need to exceed the budgeted amount, the Participating UN Organization concerned will submit a supplementary budget request to the Steering Committee.

3. Indirect costs of the Participating UN Organizations recovered through programme support costs will be 7%. In accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution 62/208 (2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review principle of full cost recovery), all other costs incurred by each Participating UN Organization in carrying out the activities for which it is responsible under the Fund will be recovered as direct costs.

The Administrative Agent will be entitled to allocate an administrative fee of one percent (1%) of the amount contributed by each donor signing an Administrative Arrangement, to meet the Administrative Agent's costs of performing the Administrative Agent's functions.

5. Governance Arrangements

a) International Steering Committee

An international Steering Committee (ISC) of the RWEE FUND will be set to oversee the allocation of funds mobilized at international level, and discuss the RWEE FUND requirements and priorities regarding the implementation modalities, the results based reporting, and the information management including donor visibility. It will review the annual progress reports consolidated by the AA, and give guidance to ensure consistency in reporting from the various countries and documentation of lessons learnt. It will also review the findings of the summary audit reports. The ISC TORs will be fully developed. The ISC will be composed of the following:

- One senior official from each of the four participating entities: UN Women, FAO, IFAD, and WFP.
- Representatives of the main donors to the RWEE FUND
- The AA will be an ex-officio member of the international SC
- The ISC will be co-chaired by the UN senior representative and the donors representative

b) Technical Advisory Committee

The composition of the RWEE FUND Technical Committee will include senior technical/advisor level representatives of UNWOMEN, FAO, IFAD and WFP. Other relevant experts, including from relevant government, regional, and civil society counterparts may be invited and/or recruited by the Technical Advisory Committee on an ad hoc basis to participate in the Committee. The Technical Committee will meet bi-annually or as required to efficiently carry out its tasks. A Technical Committee ToR will be developed and annexed to this RWEE FUND ToR. The Technical Committee will provide technical support to the Steering Committees and Participating UN Organizations.

c) National Steering Committee

A national SC of the RWEE FUND will be set up in each of the countries covered by the programme. The national SC will be co-chaired by the designated government official, and the UN Resident Coordinator in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda or the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG) in Liberia. The members of the national SC are:

- One representative from each of the participating entities: UN Women, FAO, IFAD, and WFP.
- One representative from each of the following ministries: agriculture/rural development, gender/women's affairs, economy and finance, community/local development, youth and environment.
- Representatives from the main donors to the programme.
- The MPTF Office will be an ex-officio member of the national SC.

The main tasks and responsibilities of the national SC include the following:

- To oversee the allocation of funds to the different components of the programme. More specifically:
 - For funds earmarked by donors to specific outcome areas (e.g. improved food and nutrition security, increased income, enhanced leadership and participation, or gender responsive policy environments) or activities, the national SC will review and ensure the alignment of the allocations with the RWEE country programme document and national priorities.
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- For unearmarked funds, the national SC will review and approve the criteria for the allocation of available RWEE FUND resources and allocate the available resources to the programme outcome areas. It will prioritize among the outcome areas as necessary, making sure that the allocations are aligned with the RWEE country programme document and the national priorities, and avoiding duplication and overlap between the RWEE FUND and other funding mechanisms.
- To review and approve the periodic narrative and financial progress reports consolidated by the administrative agent, based on the progress reports submitted by UN Women, FAO, IFAD and WFP.

d) Lead Agencies

The programme implementation is based on a principle of dual leadership by the four entities:

- Different agencies will lead for the implementation of the programme at country level, as reflected in the table on the countries according to selection criteria and lead agency in the section of this document on geographical coverage;
- Different agencies will lead for specific activities based on their comparative advantages as reflected in the logical framework in annex 1.

Detailed operational guidelines will be prepared to spell out what it means to be a leading agency in a country or for a specific activity. It is expected that the lead agency in a country should coordinate activities related to the consultative process for the roll out of the programme at country level, including the engagement with the Government and local donors. The lead agency will be responsible for the consolidation of the country narrative annual report. The MPTF Office as AA will consolidate the narrative and financial reports for submission to Donors. Lead agencies will therefore play a key role in ensuring coordination among agencies and between HQ and field level, carrying out joint reporting and streamlining the accounting systems.

The first seven countries chosen and the leading agencies are shown in the table below.

Country/ criteria	Participating agencies	Lead agency
Ethiopia	All four	IFAD and UN Women
Guatemala	All four	WFP
Kyrgyzstan	All four	UN Women
Liberia	All four	UN Women
Nepal	All four	UN Women
Niger	All four	FAO
Rwanda	All four	WFP

e) Programme Management Unit (PMU)

A programme management unit will be established (location to be defined) and it will be responsible for the overall management of the programme. It will be staffed by a senior programme coordinator, and an operations/knowledge management specialist. Regardless of the geographical location of the Programme Management Unit, the programme manager will report to a designated senior official from the entity hosting the PMU. In this regard, a detailed reporting and accountability mechanism

will be defined in the beginning of the programme. In each country, the programme staff will be composed of the following: a national programme coordinator and an operations manager/M&E specialist. The four entities based at Headquarters will play an advisory role throughout the life cycle of the programme. The PMU will provide Secretariat support to the International Steering Committee.

f) National Project Guidance and Coordination Mechanism

In each country, a National Project Guidance and Coordination Mechanism will be established to build synergies, address intersectionalities and review progress in the implementation of the programme's activities. It will include government representatives from Ministries such as agriculture/rural development and gender/women's affairs, the country representatives of the four entities and the national programme coordinator. Joint monthly co-ordination meetings will be held at the county level to share progress, challenges, constraints, good practices and to discuss the way forward for each project site.

g) The Administrative Agent

On behalf of the Participating UN Organizations, the Administrative Agent will:

- a. Receive contributions from donors that wish to provide financial support to the Fund;
- b. Administer such funds received, in accordance with this Memorandum of Understanding including the provisions relating to winding up the Fund Account and related matters;
- c. Subject to availability of funds, disburse such funds to each of the Participating UN Organizations in accordance with instructions from the Steering Committee, taking into account the budget set out in the approved programmatic document¹, as amended in writing from time to time by the Steering Committee;
- d. Consolidate statements and reports, based on submissions provided to the Administrative Agent by each Participating UN Organization, as set forth in the TOR, and provide these to each donor that has contributed to the Fund Account and to the Steering Committee;
- e. Provide final reporting, including notification that the Fund has been fully expended or has been wound up in accordance with the Fund TOR, in accordance with Section IV below;

Disburse funds to any Participating UN Organization for any additional costs of the task that the Steering Committee may decide to allocate.

IV. Monitoring and Evaluation

A comprehensive Performance Monitoring Framework (PMF) will be developed as an integral part of the programme, highlighting the performance indicators, data sources, collection methods and frequency, responsible actors and baselines and targets for each result (goal, outcomes and outputs). It will be developed in collaboration with local partners and with technical support from the monitoring and evaluation sections of the four entities, as detailed in the attached RWEE Programme Document.

Both an external mid-term and final evaluations of the programme are planned: the midterm

¹ As used in this document, an approved programmatic document refers to an annual work plan or a programme/project document, etc., which is approved by the Steering Committee for fund allocation purposes.

evaluation will take place in September 2015, while the final external evaluation will be conducted at the end of the programme. Their compliance with the norms of evaluation in the UN System will be ensured with support from the Evaluation Units of the four entities.

V. Audit

The AA and Participating UN Organizations will be audited in accordance with their own Financial Regulations and Rules and, in accordance with the Framework for auditing MDTFs which has been agreed to by the Internal Audit Services of Participating UN Organizations and endorsed by the UNDG in September 2007.

VI. Reporting

1. Regular reporting will be an integral part of M&E for systematic and timely provision of information. Implementing partners will be reporting on progress on programme management at least semi-annually, and on financial management – at least quarterly.

Each Participating UN Organization will provide the Administrative Agent with the following statements and reports prepared in accordance with the accounting and reporting procedures applicable to the Participating UN Organization concerned, as set forth in the TOR. The Participating UN Organizations will endeavour to harmonize their reporting formats to the extent possible.

- a. Annual narrative progress reports, to be provided no later than three months (31 March) after the end of the calendar year;
- b. Annual financial statements and reports as of 31 December with respect to the funds disbursed to it from the Fund Account, to be provided no later than four months (30 April) after the end of the calendar year;
- c. Final narrative reports, after the completion of the activities in the approved programmatic document and including the final year of the activities in the approved programmatic document, to be provided no later than four months (30 April) of the year following the financial closing of the Fund. The final report will give a summary of results and achievements compared to the goals and objectives of the Fund; and
- d. Certified final financial statements and final financial reports after the completion of the activities in the approved programmatic document and including the final year of the activities in the approved programmatic document, to be provided no later than six months (30 June) of the year following the financial closing of the Fund.

2. The Administrative Agent will prepare consolidated narrative progress and financial reports, based on the reports referred to in paragraph xxx above, and will provide those consolidated reports to each donor that has contributed to the Fund Account, as well as the Steering Committees, in accordance with the timetable established in the Administrative Arrangement.

3. The Administrative Agent will also provide the donors, Steering Committees and Participating UN Organizations with the following statements on its activities as Administrative Agent:

- a. Certified annual financial statement (“Source and Use of Funds” as defined by UNDG guidelines) to be provided no later than five months (31 May) after the end of the calendar year; and



- b. Certified final financial statement (“Source and Use of Funds”) to be provided no later than seven months (31 July) of the year following the financial closing of the Fund.
4. Consolidated reports and related documents will be posted on the websites of the UN in [country] ([website URL]) and the Administrative Agent (<http://mptf.undp.org>).

VII. Public Disclosure

Each Participating UN Organization will take appropriate measures to publicize the RWEE FUND and to give due credit to the other Participating UN Organizations. Information given to the press, to the beneficiaries of the RWEE FUND, all related publicity material, official notices, reports and publications, will acknowledge the role of the host Government, the donors, the Participating UN Organizations, the AA and any other relevant entities. In particular, the AA will include and ensure due recognition of the role of each Participating UN Organization and partners in all external communications relating to the RWEE FUND.

The AA, in consultation with the Participating UN Organizations, will ensure that decisions regarding the review and approval of the RWEE FUND as well as periodic reports on the progress of implementation of the RWEE FUND, associated external evaluation are posted, where appropriate, for public information on the website of the RWEE FUND and the AA (<http://mptf.undp.org/>). Such reports and documents may include approved programmes and programmes awaiting approval, RWEE FUND level annual financial and progress reports and external evaluations, as appropriate.

VIII. Other Matters

The RWEE FUND will be established upon signing of the Memorandum of Understanding amongst at least two Participating UN Organizations and the Administrative Agent. It will become operational upon signing of the first Standard Administrative Arrangement with the donor. Nothing in this TORs affects the provisions agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding between Participating UN Organizations and the United Nations Development Programme regarding the Operational Aspects of the RWEE FUND.

The RWEE FUND will terminate upon completion of all Programmes funded through the RWEE FUND and after satisfaction of all commitments and liabilities. Notwithstanding the completion of the initiatives financed from the RWEE FUND, any unutilized balances will continue to be held in the RWEE FUND Account until all commitments and liabilities incurred in implementation of the Projects/Programmes have been satisfied and project activities have been brought to an orderly conclusion.

Any balance remaining in the RWEE FUND Account or in the individual Participating UN Organizations’ accounts upon completion of RWEE FUND shall be used as decided by the National and International Steering Committees.

