





COUNTRY PROGRAMME DOCUMENT

MPTF RWEE FUND

Duration of the project:	25/05/2022 – 24/05/2027
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UN Organization	
Name of Representative: Navanita Sinha	
Title: Head of Office, a.i.	
Signature:	
Name of Organization: UN Women	
Date & Seal:	31-May-2022 7:16 AM EDT 

Chair of ISC – RWEE Fund

Name of Representative: Seemin Qayum

Title: Policy Advisor, Sustainable Development

Signature:

Name of Organization: UN-Women

Date & Seal: 14 June 2022 11:30 AM EST

Country Programme Proposal for Nepal April 2022

Total budget requested:

Direct beneficiaries (disaggregated by sex):

Indirect beneficiaries:

Duration of programme:

Implementing partners:

Geographical location:

USD \$5 million

5,500 women and 500 men

25,800 household members; 200 elected leaders including government officials.

May 2022 – April 2027

Direct implementation (all agencies); Civil Society Organisations (IFAD, UN Women, WFP)

Siraha and Saptari districts in Madhesh Province

1. Background and Context

Women constitute 51.04 per cent of Nepal's population,¹ nearly 80 per cent of whom live in rural areas.² A total of 26 per cent of households are headed by women.³ The contribution of rural women to the national economy is enormous, as women constitute 70 per cent of the workforce in agriculture – a sector

¹ Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2021 (Provisional data)

² <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=NP>

³ CBS, 2014

that contributes to 20.2 per cent of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). A total of 60.4 per cent of the entire population relies on agriculture for their livelihoods (MoF, 2021).⁴ Despite the huge contribution of rural women towards agriculture and the rural economy, only 26 per cent of women in Nepal own property (NPC, 2020).⁵ Moreover, the vast majority of the rural female population spend most of their time on unpaid care and domestic work. A recent World Food Programme (WFP) study⁶ showed that the average off-farm income of women is 28 per cent of that of men (NPR 156,135/USD 1,300) and the average farm income of women is 62 per cent of the male income (NPR 11,714/USD 98)⁷. Rural women lack access to services, resources, information and opportunities which prevent them from enjoying their rights over production resources achieving their economic potential.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal, and committed to under the Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS: 2015-2035), National Gender Equality Policy (2020) and the 15th Five Year Development Plan of the Government of Nepal (2019/20 to 2023/24). These are in alignment with global commitments, Agenda 2030 and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁸ These policy frameworks are an important basis for securing rural women's livelihoods, rights and resilience. The Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act 2018 outlines farmers rights in food-related policy-making processes and protection from negative impacts of globalized agricultural trade (NLC, 2018)⁹. The importance of minimum protection, including women's rights to organize, minimum remuneration, occupational health and safety, statutory social protection, childcare, as well as access to markets and economic resources including technology and credit and information, are outlined in the Kathmandu Declaration,¹⁰ which is also in line with the objectives of supporting green, resilient and inclusive development (WBG, 2021).¹¹ Furthermore, the Agenda 2030 principle of "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB) provides a strong framework for the inclusion of socio-economically marginalized groups, which is paramount in Nepal's context of extensive ethnographic and religious diversity.

Despite these policy provisions, rural women in Nepal continue to face economic and social exclusion. Further, food systems are becoming increasingly fragile and unsustainable because of the impacts of climate change and other unavoidable shocks. In situations of food shortages and other disasters, women suffer disproportionately because of their poor access to resources, services and information, their heavy burden of unpaid care and domestic work, and discriminatory traditional social norms. Their adaptive capacity is low as a result of limited alternative livelihood options and their reliance on subsistence agriculture. Their situation is further compounded by the prevalence of high poverty, poor housing conditions,¹² poor water and sanitation,¹³ increased malnutrition¹⁴ and poor access to finance and other productive resources. Consequently, Madhesh Province which is proposed for programme implementation has a low Human Development Index (HDI) and a low Gender Empowerment Index

⁴ Economic Survey 2020/21 Ministry of Finance (MoF), Government of Nepal

⁵ NPC, (2020), Nepal's Sustainable Development Goals, Status and Roadmap: 2016-2030, Government of Nepal, Kathmandu

⁶ WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023, (Baseline Survey Results – May 2020), 2020

⁷ USD \$1 is equivalent to approximately NPR 120.

⁸ Goal 1: No poverty; Goal 2: Zero Hunger; Goal 5: Gender Equality; and Goal 8: Inclusive growth.

⁹ Nepal Law Commission 2018

¹⁰ <https://hnsa.org.in/sites/default/files/Kathmandu%20Declaration%202000.pdf>

¹¹ From COVID-19 Crisis Response to Resilient Recovery: *Saving Lives and Livelihoods while Supporting Green, Resilient and Inclusive Development (GRID)*, Development Committee, WBG, April 2021

¹² The National Population and Housing Census (CBS, 2012) reported that 61 per cent of houses in Province 2 have poor construction.

¹³ Open defecation is widely practiced in Nepal's Terai region, where the Madhesh Province is located. Research suggests that 43 per cent of households defecate in open places in the eastern Terai.

¹⁴ The prevalence of stunting, wasting and food poverty rates on average in Madhesh Province are estimated to be 39 per cent, 14 per cent and 20 per cent respectively (Small Area Estimate of Undernutrition in Nepal, 2014, CBS, World Bank, WFP and UNICEF, CBS, NCHS 2011).

(GEI).¹⁵ Similarly, rural women are disadvantaged due to the prevalence of restrictive socio-cultural norms and taboos such as child marriage, witchcraft, gender based violence, dowry, restriction on women's mobility after certain hours of the day, inequitable food consumption practices, and limited interaction with people outside their families. As a result, many women have psychosocial support needs but are unable to access psychosocial services due to their lack of access to information. They also have less access to services such as financial and banking services as many of them do not hold a certificate of citizenship, which is mandatory to access these services, including government services.

WFP's baseline survey for their Country Strategic Plan (CSP) 2019 found that 66.1 per cent of rural women do not know of any strategies to prevent or cope with the negative impacts of climate change, while the figure for men is at 58 per cent. In this context, gender-based knowledge, experiences and perceptions are crucial to devise inclusive and sustainable climate-resilient response mechanisms.

Madhesh Province¹⁶, where the JP RWEE will be implemented, has the highest number of economically and socially marginalized groups in Nepal. The province has the highest number of female-headed households, the highest prevalence of health issues (e.g., wasting and anaemia among children and women of reproductive age), the highest concentration of landlessness and the highest prevalence of harmful traditional practices, such as dowry, child marriages and witchcraft.¹⁷ The Madhesh Province is also highly disaster-prone. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these vulnerabilities¹⁸ and triggered significant reversals in gender equality gains within the country. It has disproportionately affected female-headed households and agriculture-based wage labour, resulting in job loss and food insecurity, as well as increased unpaid care and domestic work and increased domestic violence.

Madhesh Province has experienced an increasing number of climate change impacts in recent years, including increased drought, monsoon floods and water shortages, which have affected farming. People's livelihoods and food security are extremely vulnerable to climate change.¹⁹ There has been damage to standing crops and cropland as a result of yearly floods, loss of land productivity (due to deposition of sand and sludge), damaged houses and infrastructure, and scarcity of clean drinking water. A 2020 WFP study suggested that Madhesh Province has the lowest Climate Capacity Score (CCS) value²⁰ in Nepal, with a score of 3 compared to the national average of 4.1. Women are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate-induced disasters, such as floods and landslides, because they have to take shelter on unsafe roadsides, embankments, in open spaces and inside school buildings. It is also difficult to maintain basic sanitation, menstrual hygiene and essential care, especially for women with disabilities, which makes them more vulnerable to violence and sexual abuse. Furthermore, women's care-work is intensified during and after floods and other natural disasters, as they need to spend extra hours and to work harder to find clean water and firewood and take care of children and older family members.

¹⁵ Madhesh Province has districts ranked at the lowest 23rd in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI).

¹⁶ Madhesh Province was previously called Province 2 but has now been formally named Madhesh Pradesh (Province) by its provincial parliament.

¹⁷ This province contains a) the highest prevalence of poverty (47.9 per cent against Nepal's national average of 28.6 per cent); b) the highest number of poor and historically marginalized social groups (Muslims, Dalits, Terai Janajati and Madhesi caste groups); c) the highest number of female-headed households (52 per cent due to male migration); d) the highest prevalence of wasting (13.9 per cent) and anemia (59.4 per cent) among children (<5 years) and women of reproductive age (57.8 per cent); e) the highest concentration of 'landless' people; and f) a high prevalence of harmful socio-cultural practices, such as dowry, child marriage and witchcraft (UN Nepal Community Perception Report on Harmful Practices, 2019, https://nepal.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/HP_perception_survey.pdf) (18 WFP COVID-19 Economic Vulnerability Index, https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP_0000117595/download/?_ga=2.215165399.1107130075.1630558435-1627614695.1630558435)

¹⁹ MoFE, 2021. <https://reliefweb.int/report/nepal/vulnerability-and-risk-assessment-and-identifying-adaptation-options-summary-policy>

²⁰ The Climate Capacity Score (CCS) value measures a community's ability to manage climatic shocks and risks.

2. Geographical Location and Targeting

The proposed programme will be implemented in two districts (Siraha and Saptari) within the Madhesh Province (southern Nepal) in the selected wards of at least two municipalities per working district. Madhesh Province holds the most fertile land in the country yet inequalities among its population are high, including poor access to productive resources, high levels of food insecurity and disparities in wages between men and women (WFP, 2020).

The WFP's CSP baseline survey (2020) shows that the Consumption Based Coping Strategy Index (CBCSI) value in Madhesh was only 0.47 per cent. A total of 34 per cent of children under the age of five are stunted, 9 per cent are wasted and 26 per cent are underweight. The proportion of children receiving the minimum acceptable diet is the lowest in the country (18 per cent). Certain areas of Madhesh are also vulnerable to natural disasters, especially to floods, highlighting the need to support both climate smart-farming technologies and disaster preparedness.

The 2020 WFP study showed that 78.2 per cent of the population of the study area in Madhesh Province belong to disadvantaged groups. Occupation wise, 78.7 per cent are employed in agriculture and 53.3 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 years have no education. Likewise, migration is a common phenomenon and 20.2 per cent women have migrated in the past 10 years. Most significantly, 87.7 per cent of women do not own any plots of land (UN, 2021²¹).

In Nepal, only 53.2 per cent of female-headed households (HHs) have accounts in financial institutions (FIs), a figure that is likely to be lower in Madhesh Province (only 28.7 per cent of women in the province have a bank account). In Madhesh, women are poorly represented in community groups, as only 30.1 per cent of women are members of a savings and credit (S/C) group, 2.4 per cent are members of mother groups and 0.7 per cent are members of farmers groups. While looking at the wellbeing of this demographic, based on the intersectional lenses of gender, caste and ethnicity, there are distinct disparities. In Madhesh Province, women head 13.2 per cent of households; this includes 20.8 per cent in Siraha and 15.3 per cent in Saptari. Of the women aged 15 to 49 years, only 38.5 per cent are employed. In the employment sectors, 78.7 per cent of the total population is employed in agriculture and 84.1 per cent of women who are employed earn less than their husbands. The population of Madhesh spend 67.2 per cent of consumption-related spending on food. (UN, 2021).

Gender-based violence (GBV) is highly prevalent in Madhesh Province. Among women aged between 15 and 49 years, 34.2 per cent have experienced physical violence and 6.1 per cent sexual violence. In addition to this, 76.4 per cent of those who have experienced different forms of violence have not told anybody or sought help. (UN, 2021).

It is important to recognize diversity and intersecting identities among women in Nepal. Excluded groups, such as single women; women with disabilities; *Dalits*; women from ethnic minorities; sexual minorities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning or intersex (LGBTQI); and GBV survivors are all further stigmatized and discriminated against based on their identity, physical and economic conditions. For example, women with disabilities are confronted by social stigma, discrimination, physical barriers and lack of accessible information and services. Their double

²¹ https://www.un.org.np/sites/default/files/doc_publication/2021-01/RevisedWomenFactsheet-Province2_1.pdf

marginalization (or multiple marginalization if they are from an ethnic or religious minority or lower caste) places enormous burdens on their everyday life. Similarly, LGBTIQ community face multiple forms of discrimination and stigma to live a dignified life despite some progressive legal provisions in Nepal.

Therefore, in line with the concept of intersectionality that aims to recognize each individual's identity at different spheres,²² the programme will ensure inclusion of the most marginalised women and support local governments and other stakeholders to work with specific groups to address the range of barriers that lead to their exclusion. Recognizing the multiple forms of inequalities and discrimination specific to climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, the JP RWEE Phase II will ensure targeted interventions for economically marginalized, landless, *Dalit* women and/or women labourers. These will include vulnerability-responsive insurance, relief packages, green recovery jobs and safety net mechanisms.

A total of 5,500 rural women and 500 men will be targeted as direct beneficiaries, which will include 1,000 single women including female headed households, 100 women with disabilities, 50 LGBTQI, 1,500 lactating mothers, 500 pregnant women, 1,000 Madhesi women, 500 *Dalit* women, 500 *Janajati* women and 350 GBV survivors. A total of 500 men from excluded/vulnerable groups (150 each from *Dalit*, Madhesi and *Janajati* communities and 50 from Muslim community) will also be targeted as direct beneficiaries.

3. Justification

The proposed programme will work towards holistically strengthening the economic capacity and resilience of rural women in order to address the structural barriers that preventing their social and economic inclusion, whilst also responding to the negative effects of COVID-19 and climate change. The intervention aims to create an enabling environment for employability, productivity gains, household income and gender-responsive policies to secure rural women's livelihood, rights and resilience.

The major lessons learned from JP RWEE Phase I included:

- i) The critical important of changing social norms to bring about transformative changes in the lives of rural women.
- ii) Enhancing collaborative actions to amplify women's voices and influence policy and related decision making processes.

It is critical that this new phase of the JP RWEE recognizes women as producers, promotes their leadership in agriculture, ensures their access to markets, resources and credits and invests in their businesses. However, this can only take place when there is an enabling environment supporting women's advancement at all levels, such as the family, community, market and policy level. The JP RWEE in Nepal views women's economic empowerment as a complex and multi-dimensional change that requires interventions at various levels and domains. The COVID-19 pandemic has also revealed the importance of a collective, rights-based response that prioritizes the needs of those made most vulnerable during times of crises. This will be accomplished by applying a resilience²³ lens across all interventions and addressing social norm change.

²² Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Working Group, 2017.

²³ As mentioned in the Theory of Change of Phase II, the application of a social, economic and environmental resilience lens will be ensured across all interventions to reduce vulnerabilities and enhance rural women's resilience and ability to mitigate and adapt to shocks and stresses to their livelihood systems.

Based on the lessons learned from Phase I, there are several approaches that show the importance of harnessing the expertise of the PUNOs to achieve sustainable change. The programme has an opportunity to upscale some critical areas of engagement, such as: i) taking a group approach, with emphasis on their meaningful participation in key decision-making bodies and supporting local governments to recognise rural women as important economic actors; ii) addressing social and gender-discriminatory norms practiced in the community that hinder women's empowerment, thus involving men and boys in the programme interventions as indirect beneficiaries; iii) accompanying knowledge generated from the programme interventions with quality analysis for wider sharing and adoption beyond the JP RWEE programme; iv) investing in government ownership mainly for local governments, which is critical for the institutionalization and sustainability of the programme impacts.

Phase II will also emphasize the following operational objectives:

- i. Transition women subsistence farmers to commercial agricultural entrepreneurs, including a focus on gender sensitive value chain development.
- ii. Support climate-resilient and sustainable food systems by introducing climate-smart technologies and services.
- iii. Support green recovery job-creation for rural women affected by COVID-19.
- iv. Strengthen the leadership and participation (and, in so doing, voice and agency) of rural women in local decision-making and help them to develop community assets.
- v. Enable family members to work together to improve relationships and decision making to bring transformative change in the lives of rural women.
- vi. Achieve more gender equitable workloads and strengthen the overall well-being of households and all their members through the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) and by rolling out the Business Action Learning for Innovation (BALI) for entrepreneurship.
- vii. Collaborate with national cash-based school meal programmes to link rural women to reliable markets and localized value chains.
- viii. Provide support to local governments for gender responsive planning and budgeting and gender transformative institutional change
- ix. Conduct a series of policy dialogues on GESI-responsive agriculture, thus strengthening women's leadership in the agriculture sector at the federal, provincial and local levels.

In light of the upcoming election in 2022 (local elections are announced for May and will be followed by provincial and federal elections), the JP RWEE will continue to invest in rural women's leadership and support their capacity to engage in decision-making processes at the local level, while ensuring that their interests are prioritized in local governance mechanisms.

Also, in line with the ongoing federalization process, interventions will be designed in response to the federal, provincial and local government level priorities. Since agriculture is the concurrent responsibility of the three tiers of the government, with exclusive mandates to local government to manage agriculture services and food and nutrition security-related programmes at the local level, the JP RWEE will have a greater focus on local level policy implementation. The programme will also focus on relevant policy support as relates to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) at the federal, provincial and local level based on rigorous discussion with the three tiers of the government. The relevant government ministries have already committed their support to the new phase of the JP RWEE.

The programme interventions will be implemented in an integrated and complementary manner to achieve the desired outcomes. All partners will take on the following responsibilities:

- a) FAO will focus on climate-resilient and labour-saving technology for increasing the productivity, as well as on nutrition (Outcome 1).
- b) IFAD will focus on facilitating investments through rural women's access to credit facility and financial services; enhancing Financial Education and Business Literacy (FEBL) and supporting more gender equitable household relations and workloads through the rollout of GALs and BALI (Outcomes 2 and 3).
- c) WFP will focus on expanding rural women farmers' access to markets and creating green recovery jobs, developing resilient livelihoods through entrepreneurship development and contributing to climate-resilient and sustainable food systems. WFP will also be responsible for social and behavioural change communication related to nutrition, capacity building of rural women in food storage structures, and promoting risk-management strategies (Outcome 1 and 2).
- d) UN Women will focus on strengthening the leadership, voices and agency of rural women, which will include enhancing gender-responsive programmes, mechanisms and policies and innovative models that advance the rights of rural women farmers. UN Women will also support community level social care infrastructure to reduce women's unpaid work and ensure their access to a range of services, as well as markets.

Based on the lessons learned from Phase I, the programme will leverage the synergies and complementarities of the PUNOs to ensure a multiplier effect of the programme. The programme will also strategically engage men/boys and mothers-in-law from the families of rural women and communities while implementing each activity/programme in order to contribute to the change required in social norms for the achievement of gender transformative change.

The PUNOs will carry out joint activities and methodologies, such as the formation of rural women farmers' group with whom all agencies will work; a joint needs assessment embedded in the baseline study; joint work plans; joint capacity development training for staff; a joint staff team for monitoring, coordination and reporting; and a joint mid-term review, endline and final evaluation. Synergies will also be built with other programme being implemented by the PUNOs in the intervention area.

4. Programme Description by Outcome

The JP RWEE will achieve the four programme outcomes through implementing the programme strategies and approaches outlined in the global framework for the programme, and with specific attention to gender transformation and resilience building as cross cutting lenses.

Outcome 1: Improved food security and nutrition for rural women and their households that contribute to equitable and sustainable food systems. (5,500 rural women and 500 men)

Activities under outcome one will focus on addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition by enhancing access to adequate, safe, diversified, and nutrient-rich food through capacity enhancement and the provision of inputs including seed, small scale irrigation, farm equipment, and climate resilient technology. This combination of support will enable farmers to increase the production and productivity

of selected crops. A skills based learning approach, the Nutrition Field School (NFS), will be used within the women's farmers groups. This involves using behaviour change theory to address barriers and identify catalysts for improved nutrition practices. The anticipated increased and diversified production will enrich their nutritional status and that of their households, as well as contributing to household food security. Behaviour change approaches will also help to remove the social barriers that prevent women from engaging in activities that are considered to be the exclusive domain of men, (e.g. operating machines, ploughing land). The increased use of agricultural machines, equipment and service will contribute to reducing drudgery and increasing land and labour productivity. The time saved will allow women more time for investing in networking, mobility, market access and group activities, etc. Women will be involved in the development of productive community assets and the capacity of rural women to engage in the design and implementation of local initiatives such as the Municipal Agricultural Development Committees (MADCs) and the Custom Hiring Centre (CHC) will be developed.²⁴ Finally, women's farmer groups will also be linked to local government support and services, who will be closely involved in the activities under this outcome. This combined effort will ultimately aim to contribute to climate-resilient and sustainable food production systems for better food security and nutrition. Activities will be primarily implemented by FAO, UN Women and WFP.

Output 1.1: Rural women have increased access to resources, assets and technologies critical for climate-resilient agricultural production, food security and nutrition (FAO, UN Women and WFP).

- Support rural women's access to climate-resilient inputs for agricultural production such as quality drought resistant seeds, women friendly time saving tools and machinery, water and irrigation, polytunnels (FAO).
- Improve rural women's capacity to assess climate-risk, identify adaptation needs and support adaptation planning for enhancing climate-resilient and sustainable food system in selected settlement/wards of the Municipalities (WFP).
- Support construction/rehabilitation of climate-resilient, productivity enhancing and timesaving community assets like rainwater harvesting, small irrigation, flood protection, community plantations through the Cash Assistance for Asset model (WFP).
- Support targeted activities for landless/women agricultural labourers by organizing for their collective bargaining, providing skills and capacity trainings on new agricultural technologies (WFP).
- Enhance the capacities of women-led associations to manage productive assets, increase access to capital and to deliver effective services and information to their members (WFP).
- Conduct nutrition field school (nutritious food production of locally available produce, food safety and hygiene, postharvest loss reduction) (FAO).

²⁴ Custom hiring centers are the place/mechanism that will rent out farm machinery to farmers who cannot afford to purchase high-end agricultural machines and equipment. The government of Nepal will support the establishment of such centers to bring the private sector, projects and cooperatives on board with providing custom hiring facilities to farmers.

Output 1.2: Rural women have enhanced skills and capacities to increase nutritious food production, food quality and local food security reserves, reduce food losses and waste and improve household diets (WFP).

- Strengthen the capacities of women farmers in climate-resilient and nature-based agricultural practices including field preparation, cultivation, fertilization, pest and disease control, and harvesting (FAO).
- Provide training on nutrition and sustainable consumption for women and men to improve household diets (Social and Behavior Change Communication for nutrition education) (WFP).
- Support women's cooperatives in the construction and management of local food banks (WFP).
- Develop food processing and storage facilities, using innovative, productivity enhancing and culturally and ecologically acceptable technologies through the cash-assistance for assets (CFA) model (WFP).
- Increase rural women's access to climate and weather information and agro-advisory by linking women's groups to ICT based climate/weather information system, and advisory (linking with Agriculture Management Information System of the Government of Nepal) (WFP).

Outcome 2: Rural women's income, decent work and economic autonomy are increased to secure their livelihoods and build resilience. (5,500 rural women and 500 men)

Outcome 2 will focus on providing capacity building to women's groups, cooperatives, enterprises and landless groups to increase their income generation potential through different production ventures, such as land leasing for farming. Within this outcome, rural women will be organized and supported to develop their skills in financial and business literacy. Activities will also focus on enabling rural women-owned micro-enterprises or producer organizations to engage in formal contracts with public institutions and private agri-business groups. This will include: forward contracts with schools to link rural women to stable demands in schools created by the government-run, cash-based school meals programme and private entities to sell their products; peer-to-peer sharing approaches; linking women with banks and financial institutions for credit and financial services; crop and livestock insurance services; improving Information Communication Technology (ICT) access and other business services, as well as individual and collective bargaining capacity for their produce and decent work spaces. Activities will also focus on gender-responsive social care infrastructure and other essential services that have a disproportionate impact on women's care burden, as well as the safety and security of rural women in relation to their mobility. The social protection-related interventions will be an inclusive part of this outcome, as extremely low-income and landless women will be supported through green recovery job creation approaches in which rural unemployed women will receive cash wages for engaging in the development of community assets that will support their community in developing its response capacity during disasters. Activities under this outcome aim to contribute to securing better incomes through generating value addition to products, creating better working spaces and allowing women to receive critical services through Local Resource Persons (LRPs)²⁵ developed by the programme interventions.

²⁵ individuals who are relatively resourceful and invest time in acquiring trait-specific training, practice in their own field, expand their knowledge to other farmers groups, etc., are considered local resource persons (LRPs) and one of the major means to promote farmer to farmer (FTF) extension services as per the National

Accompaniment and referral support to rural women in order to enable them to access financial institutions, banking institutions and other referral mechanisms including legal aid will also be provided. This outcome will be implemented by IFAD, FAO, UN Women and WFP.

Output 2.1: Rural women have enhanced capacities, skills and time for entrepreneurship and access to markets and value chains (IFAD and WFP).

- Support women-led associations and businesses to progress beyond the production stage and develop links to value addition and markets, including smallholder women's linkage to localized value chain through home-grown school feeding (WFP).
- Engage with actors along the value chain for gender-responsive market chain development (e.g. gender-responsive procurement contracts, partnerships, and training) (WFP).
- Provide training and grant supports for establishing women-led processing/value addition enterprises and product diversification strategies (WFP).
- Conduct Financial Education and Business Literacy (FEBL) classes to enhance the financial and business capacity of rural women and access to bank and financial institutions (IFAD).

Output 2.2: Rural women have increased access to decent work, including off-farm work and social protection (WFP).

- Support rural women's access to social protection systems (e.g. cash for work and food for assets) (WFP).
- Establishment and operationalization of custom hiring centre by women groups in collaboration with local governments/stakeholders (FAO).
- Pilot a model of gender transformative social care infrastructure and participatory safety audits (UN Women).

Output 2.3: Rural women have increased access to gender-responsive financial and business development services, ICTs and other products and services (IFAD, UN Women and WFP).

- Engage with insurance service providers and agents to strengthen women farmers' access to crop/livestock insurance (WFP).
- Provide accompaniment and referral support to access financial institutions, banking institutions and other referral mechanisms, including legal aid (UN Women).
- Evidence based advocacy on the design and delivery of gender-responsive financial products and banking services (UN Women).
- Work with cooperatives and Financial Institutions, including Agriculture Development Bank Limited (ADBL), for linking women's producer groups and cooperatives to credit and other financial services (IFAD).

Extension Strategy in Nepal: Local resource persons support other farmers to go commercial, also providing paid/unpaid service to new farmers, supplying inputs like seeds, buying outputs, linking insurance, linking veterinary, linking with credit services, etc.

- Provide training to FEBL facilitators on service linkages for *KISHAN* card and GEO Krishi and other ICT services (IFAD).
- Link women groups with KISAN Card/GEO Krishi Mobile Application of VITA/ADBL and apply (disseminate the application (IFAD)
- Provide comprehensive support packages, including access to psychosocial, GBV and access to legal identity assistance, legal and financial services (UN Women).

Outcome 3: Rural women’s voices and agency are increased for full and equal participation and leadership in their households, communities, organizations and governance systems. (5,500 rural women and 500 men)

Outcome 3 aims to amplify women’s voices and enhance their participation and leadership capacity in local structures, such as farmer’s groups, forestry groups, mother’s groups, cooperatives and municipal-level agriculture committees. The outcome mainly focuses on developing leadership within households (HHs), communities and organizations through the implementation of different methodologies and tools. To achieve this, well proven methodologies, such as the Gender Actional Learning System (GALS),²⁶ will be undertaken among the most financially vulnerable households of the women groups, followed by the Business Action Learning Initiative (BALI) to enhance women’s entrepreneurship skills among the HHs who have completed basic GALS. There will also be community dialogues to promote positive changes in gender discriminatory norms and attitudes, which will also aim to support women in raising their voices through evidence-based advocacy in agency-level forums. This will ultimately lead to Learning Routes (LR) for knowledge sharing to scale up the intervention. Activities under this outcome will work to: strengthen rural women’s individual and collective voices; develop their agency and increase their influence at household and community level; increase their participation and decision making in local level forums and governance platforms. This outcome will be implemented by IFAD and UN Women.

Output 3.1: Rural women have increased skills and capacity to participate in local governance and decision-making structures (UN Women and IFAD).

- Support rural women with holistic capacity development initiatives by strengthening their leadership capacity (including public speaking and negotiation skills) at the local level forums and governance platforms to ensure their voice, agency and influence (UN Women).
- Promote linkages and coordination between the rural women farmers network (ensuring intersectionality) and other existing local level women’s network in the districts, as well as governance platforms to ensure their voice, agency and influence at the local level and gender-responsive adaptation interventions in agriculture (UN Women).
- Establish networking and coordination for representation of rural women farmers in the local level committee, such as user groups, land management committees and cooperatives, among others (UN Women).

²⁶ GALS will be extended to all the households blending with FEBL as GALS ‘lite’ to facilitate the intra-household joint planning and decision making, which will

- Engage with men as religious and traditional leaders, chiefs, local authorities and men in general to guarantee political and social recognition of the role of women (UN Women).
- Hold gender equality trainings and/or peer-to-peer exchanges using behavior change models with members and leaders of organizations in order to promote greater gender balance among the leadership (IFAD).

Output 3.2: Organizational capacities and social capital are strengthened to form, participate in and sustain gender-responsive producer organizations, cooperatives and unions, savings groups and self-help groups (FAO and IFAD).

- Provide capacity development support to rural women farmers' groups on group management and strengthening (FAO).
- Carry out the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) among the most poor and vulnerable HHs (IFAD)
- Conduct BALI Training for selected individuals who have complete the basic GALS and moving towards enterprise level (IFAD).
- Undertake specific technical training based on the enterprises identified through BALI (IFAD).
- Undertake community dialogues to promote positive changes in gender discriminatory norms and attitudes, the sharing of knowledge networking and consultative mechanisms after GALS and BALI (IFAD).

Outcome 4: Gender-responsive legal frameworks, policies and institutions are strengthened to create an enabling environment for rural women to secure their livelihoods, rights and resilience.

Outcome 4 ultimately aims to achieve Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) responsiveness in policy frameworks and institutions. Activities under this outcome will contribute to policy revisions, allocation of public budgets for gender equality and the wider sharing of learning generated out of the programme interventions. To achieve this outcome, the programme will organize trainings, policy dialogue platforms and conduct public hearings to generate evidence for advocacy at the federal, provincial and local levels. Local government will be supported in GESI-responsive policy implementation including gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in the agriculture sector at the local level, ensuring the targeting and mainstreaming of provisions and mandatory programmes with conditional budgets and guiding principles. This will also include efforts to increase investments in care and decent employment opportunities for rural women. Activities under this outcome will also focus on conducting a series of policy dialogues with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development and relevant ministries at the federal, provincial and local level on the gender-responsive implementation of the Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS). Interventions will be jointly implemented by IFAD and UN Women.

influence deep-rooted gender norms and power relations.

Output 4.1: The capacities of policymakers and other relevant stakeholders to design, implement and track gender-responsive policies, strategies, legal frameworks and budgets are enhanced (IFAD and UN Women). (300 government representatives and elected leaders)

- Support local government in Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) responsive policy implementation in the agriculture sector, ensuring targeting and mainstreaming provisions, mandatory programmes with gender responsive budgets and guiding principles (UN Women).
- Provide trainings and orientations to local and federal policy makers and relevant public authorities on the need for engendering disaster resilient agriculture development policies, including social protection coverage to all farmers (UN Women).
- Conduct policy dialogues with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development and relevant ministries at the federal, provincial and local level on gender-responsive implementation of the Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS) (UN Women).
- Continue advocacy among the three tiers of the government for GESI-responsive policies in the agriculture sector for gender transformative change (UN Women).
- Knowledge products development and sharing and for scaling up strategies and lessons learned (FAO, IFAD, UN Women, WFP).

Output 4.2: Capacity of rural women and their organizations increased to engage in and influence relevant policy forums at national, regional and global levels (IFAD and UN Women)

- Peer-to-peer sharing of legal content through Financial Education and Business Literacy (FEBL) (IFAD).
- Organize public hearings (through citizen engagement) with rural women farmers, focusing on the issues they face, recognition of their roles as farmers and their contributions in agriculture, and the importance of their needs being incorporated into local-level policies (UN Women).

Output 4.3: Rural women's economic empowerment strengthened through regional and global policy dialogues and processes.

- Publication and dissemination of compendium of success stories of rural women using story telling methods (UN Women and IFAD)

For the implementation of above-mentioned activities the PUNOs will: i) adopt participatory methods, which will ensure participation of beneficiaries, government, and other -relevant stakeholders in the design, execution and monitoring of programme; ii) work with women's groups and networks to enhance collective voices; iii) embrace knowledge sharing among the PUNOs and implementing agencies; iv) enhance collective and institutional capacities of beneficiaries as well as state actors to mainstream good practices of the JP RWEE in their initiatives and programmes respectively; and v) upscale successful innovative models for sustainability of the programme impacts. This will only be possible through putting concerted efforts on the human capital formation, resource allocations, process-related learning, documentation and exchange, and inclusive governance for decision making at different tiers of the governments.

5. Participatory Methodologies

The programme will follow a bottom-up approach to ensure women's meaningful participation and leadership at all levels. Participatory approaches will be used throughout implementation, including the adoption of the following implementation strategies:

Formation of rural women's groups: Women's groups will act as a key programme entry point at the local level. The group composition process will consider intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women. The group approach will help to enhance women's social capital, build their leadership potential and, in so doing, help amplify their voices and develop their agency. Women will be provided with the opportunity to articulate needs and perspectives through their regular group meetings and interactions which will be attended by the staff members of respective PUNOs in the field. Through these meetings, the voices and feedback of women will be taken into account.

Community and Household Methodologies: Programme methodologies will include approaches such as GALS, Nutrition Field School and behaviour change communication approaches which are inherently participatory in their nature and work through dialogue and discussion.

Accountability and feedback mechanisms: The PUNOs will roll out a community feedback and accountability mechanism through a secure and confidential communication system. The existing community feedback mechanism of the PUNOs (e.g. WFP's *Namaste* toll-free hotline) will be used to ensure that feedback is received on an ongoing basis and that complaints are duly addressed. Beneficiary score cards will be consulted to check whether the services are responsive to rural women's needs and priorities.

Government involvement: Representation of the federal Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development in the provincial programme coordination committees as an invitee and their participation in the joint field monitoring and multi-stakeholder consultations will be some of the major platforms for government participation in the programme. Moreover, the programme, in coordination with the local municipalities, will develop beneficiary feedback mechanisms for review, adaptation and formulation of provisions and associated institutional mechanisms to make the existing policy frameworks GESI-responsive. There will be a strategic focus on conducting a series of policy dialogues between rural women, relevant stakeholders and the government officials (including elected leaders) at the federal and provincial levels, as well as local governments for the uptake of policy feedback for gender responsiveness.

6. Theory of Change

Refer to Annexes 1A and 1B for the Theory of Change diagram and narrative respectively.

7. Monitoring & Evaluation

An M&E plan and Performance Monitoring Framework (PMF) have been developed for the programme and the PUNOs will collectively monitor activity implementation in a gender-responsive manner. The

PMF will be used for results based monitoring and will include annual milestones. It will be updated on a quarterly basis.

There will be two types of information collected 1) primary data: the programme's direct interventions encompassing goal, outcome and output level data, as well as 2) the collection of secondary data from relevant sources as needed, including the UN's regular and periodic reports and other sources, such as the three tiers of government and the private sector. The output-level data will be directly collected from the field; however, it will be further triangulated as necessary with relevant data sources from the government, non-governmental organizations, UN agencies and development partners.

Individual PUNOs will be responsible for monitoring the technical quality of their interventions. During the implementing partner contracting process, there will be a robust review of their technical and financial proposals by the relevant review committees. PUNOs will ensure that the agency staff or partners deployed to implement field activities undertake the day-to-day monitoring of the field activities, upholding the quality standards set by the PUNOs. The technical focal points from the PUNOs are also responsible for providing technical backstopping support to the field-based staff by visiting the field at least three times a year. The programme will form separate coordination committees at the local government unit, as well as the provincial ministry level. Representatives of both the committees will carry out field monitoring on a biannual basis, preferably before the annual planning and progress reporting periods.

Output-level monitoring will take place on a quarterly basis; it will be conducted bi-annually for outcome level indicators or at the mid-term and endline depending on the nature of the indicator. Review sessions will take place between PUNOs and implementing partners on a quarterly basis, following a standard format developed at the global level and will be supported by the global M&E Specialist. An annual programme review meeting will be organized at the federal level, involving all the programme staff and implementing partners, selected government officials from relevant ministries and relevant staff of the four PUNOs. This meeting will also be attended (remotely or in person) by the Global Coordination Unit. Prior to these review meetings, annual sessions will be held with beneficiaries to provide an opportunity for feedback and to capture changes, and the findings will feed into the preparation of the review meeting and the subsequent year's work plan.

A MEAL Coordinator will be responsible for the overall implementation of the M&E plan and will work closely with the other agencies and implementing partners to ensure programme quality through the robust implementation of the M&E system. The MEAL Coordinator will be based at field level and will also be responsible for coordinating any studies, programme reviews and reporting on indicator progress through the collation of data from the agencies and IPs.

State agencies will be involved in the design process of programmes and the monitoring and evaluation of frameworks to ensure institutionalization.

Whenever possible, country-based statistical systems and pre-existing and ongoing measurement exercises, such as baselines, the assessment from PUNOs' other ongoing programmes/projects as well as any gender analysis/assessments will be leveraged for programme use.

8. Sustainability and Exit Strategies

The sustainability of the programme is anticipated as follows:

- a) **Ownership of the programme by government:** The programme will be led by the government counterpart (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development) at the federal level through the mechanism of programme coordination committees at provincial level and local government units. The municipalities will be selected in close coordination with the respective local governments. The selection process will ensure the programme's implementation responds to the priorities of the local governments.
- b) **Programme integration in the government's regular plans:** The programme will be closely monitored by the representatives of the Programme Steering Committee, as well as the programme coordination committees of the provincial and local governments. Knowledge generated from the field and good practices will be considered into the relevant regular plan and budget of the local governments .
- c) **Capacity of beneficiaries to participate, represent, own and influence decisions:** Rural women organized into groups and networks, as well as women in the public domain, will be able to participate and be represented in different decision-making forums. They will be able to raise their voices to identify needs and priorities and put forward specific demands to be incorporated during the local government's regular planning and budgeting process, which will lead to programme sustainability.
- d) **Promotion of women's voice and agency:** A series of sensitisation and awareness raising for household and community members, along with capacity building in leadership and the GALS interventions, will contribute to bringing about changes in existing deeply rooted inequitable social norms. This effort will support in strengthening women's voice and agency and ensuring their rights by creating an enabling environment at home and in the community with women being increasingly valued and recognised on a more equal footing, for example in group leadership, as producers, income earners and entrepreneurs.
- e) **Sustainability and exit strategy:** A sustainability and exit strategy will be developed during the inception phase. The programme will also consider potential for scaling up as one of the options for sustainability. The programme's exit strategy will focus on the institutionalization of gender-responsive policies, guidelines and programmes of local government. The purpose of this is to establish learning routes for GALS and other tools by involving local government and other stakeholders and capacitating them to apply, scale up and include the approach in policy documents, plan and budgets. Likewise, success stories will be documented and shared for wider adoption at sub-national levels through federal and provincial ministries.

9. Knowledge Management and Communication

Knowledge Management and Communication (KMC) will be strengthened through the development and implementation of a communications and knowledge management strategy. The KM strategy component will be based on the “3Ps” of knowledge management: people (whom we target), process (how we target) and products (what knowledge we generate/document). The strategies will help to support the documenting of local experiences in order to upscale good practices and learning. The identified audience for knowledge management and communication will be rural women and their networks, local governments, private sector actors, development partners, the media and UN agencies. The KMC strategy and associated annual action plans will aim to document the experiences of rural women in securing livelihoods, asserting their rights and building resilience. A number of knowledge management and communications products will be developed during the programme, such as a compendium of stories outlining changes in women’s lives, evidence-based learning briefs, success stories, case studies, score cards and story-telling. These will be used for the development of key messages for advocacy and policy influencing. UN Women, as lead agency, will take the lead in ensuring that the communication and knowledge management plans are implemented and will work in close collaboration with the other three PUNOs. Knowledge management will be used as an important tool to generate qualitative research on rural women and other women in public life, and will document the knowledge, experiences and learning of rural women for sharing and upscaling, thereby contributing to the development of good practice in WEE programming. The four agencies will also work to ensure that good practices are shared within their agencies and that opportunities to uptake successful approaches and apply the good practice in other programmes are maximized.

10. Coordination Mechanisms

The coordination mechanisms for the programme will be guided by the principle of engagement between the three tiers of governments which make up Nepal’s federalist system. The coordination mechanism will be ensured on the following basis:

Federal level

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MoALD) will lead the programme at the federal level, with a National Steering Committee (NSC) chaired by the Secretary of the MoALD and meeting on an annual basis. The representatives from relevant sectoral ministries such as Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, Ministry of Finance will also be the member of the NSC. The Steering Committee is intended to foster and develop the government’s ownership of the programme, ensure alignment with federal priorities and guide the strategic direction of the programme. A JP RWEE National Coordinator will be the main focal point for overall coordination among and within the four PUNOs and with a government counterpart. The head of the lead agency will also be part of the NSC, along with the PUNO focal points.

Provincial level

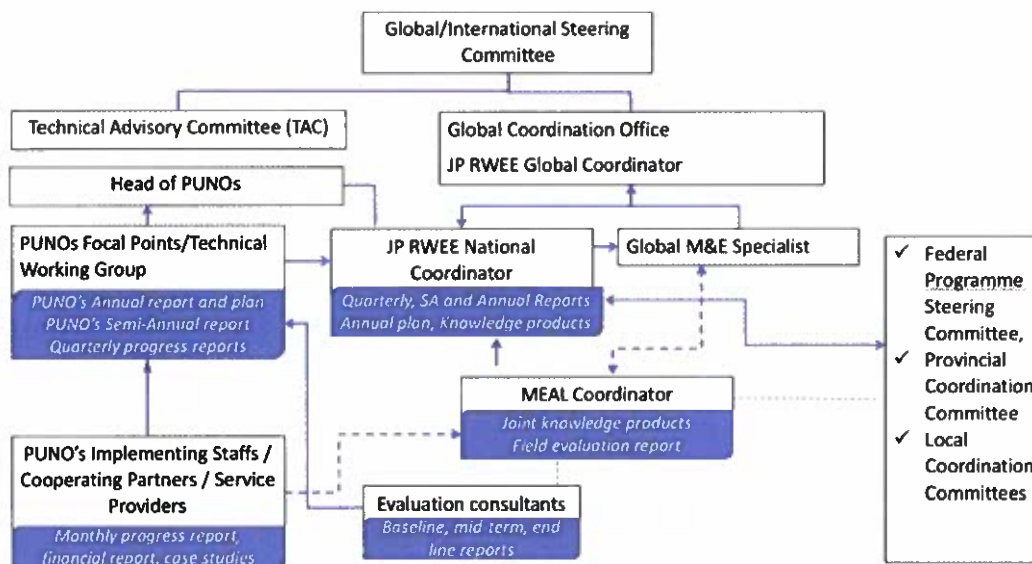
At the provincial level, the programme will have a Programme Coordination Committee (PPCC) led by the Secretary of the Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoLMAC). The main purpose of the provincial committee will be to ensure the programme is aligned with provincial priorities and to facilitate coordination between different municipalities. Representatives of the NSC can also be invited to participate in the PPCC and vice versa on an ‘as-needed’ basis. Field-level staff/partner

organizations from respective PUNOs will participate in the PCC on a rotational basis as per the thematic priorities. PPCC meetings at the provincial levels will be held bi-annually.

Local level

There will be a Municipal Coordination Committee at the Local Government Unit (LGU) level, co-chaired by the municipal mayor/chair and deputy mayor/vice chair. JP RWEE staff based in the field and UN project representatives will also be part of the committees at both the provincial and local government unit level. The implementing partners of each PUNO will also be members and present the progress of the JP RWEE to the LGU members in coordination with the MEAL Coordinator. The role of the MCC is to review technical details of the programme in terms of achievements, challenges, learnings and provide guidance for future improvements at the implementation level. LGU-level coordination meetings will be held on a quarterly basis.

The meeting schedules will align with the regular planning, review and reporting schedule of the programme. The organization structure for RWEE will be as follows:

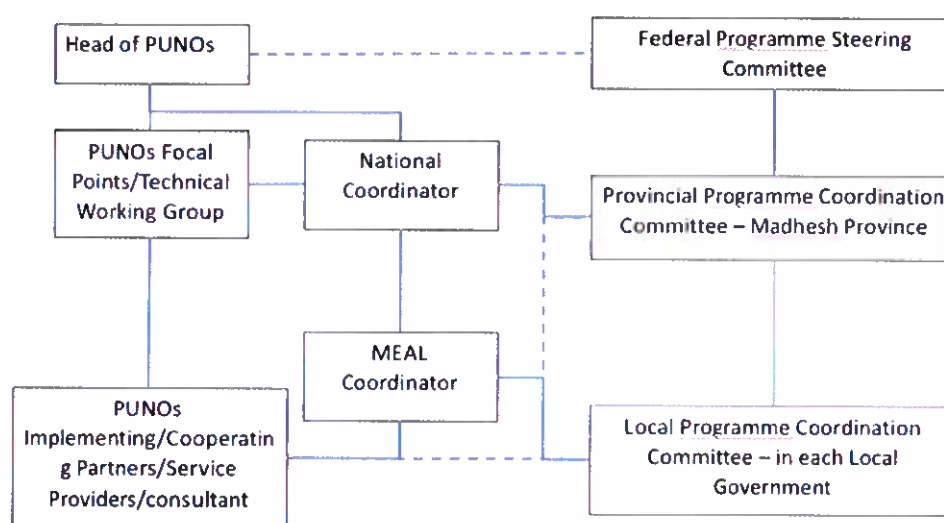


At the agency level, UN Women will be the lead agency and will be responsible for the overall coordination of the programme, which will include coordinating with federal government, carrying out external representation, and ensuring strong programme visibility, including at the level of the UN country team, and facilitating working group discussions of the four PUNOs. A National Coordinator and MEAL Coordinator will form a Programme Management Unit (PMU) within the lead agency and will be responsible, amongst other tasks, for the oversight of programme implementation, reporting and M&E. These partner agencies will report to the respective PUNOs for programme-related reporting requirement.

A technical working group will consist of the PMU and technical focal points of the four agencies. The group will meet on a monthly basis and will enable the PUNOs to exchange information, strengthen synergies and identify and solve any gaps identified during programme implementation.

Finally, there will be a coordination platform at the local level, consisting of representatives of the implementing partners, local government and the four agencies. This coordination platform will meet on a bi-annual basis to discuss progress, identify any challenges and agree on solutions. Beneficiary consultations will feed into these platform meetings.

The below diagram summarises the coordination mechanisms outlined above.



11. Risk Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment

The programme will be implemented in geographical areas where social discrimination, environmental fragility and recent economic shocks (including the impact of COVID-19 pandemic) have had a strong impact on rural livelihoods. Risks identified in the risk assessment matrix (Annex 3) are categorized as contextual, programmatic and operational risks. Potential risks to implementation include the possibility of a new COVID wave which could affect programme start-up, including the baseline survey. Further, there will be nationwide local government elections in May 2022. Federal and provincial government elections are also expected this year. This could impact the programme in a number of ways. For example, there could be a vacuum in the three tiers of government until the newly elected leaders are appointed.

The PUNOs will ensure the introduction of successful corporate tools to mitigate social and environmental risks. For example, WFP uses an Environmental & Social Risk Screening framework,

which identifies the possible environmental and social risks, measures their severity and identifies mitigation measures. This tool will be used in all community asset building work. If there is *high degree of concern* (Category A) regarding possible risks which could have significant or potentially irreversible adverse impacts on society or the environment, and if it is not possible to avoid, reduce, or mitigate those impacts, such activities will not be supported. For interventions having a *Low or Medium Degree of Concern*, the risks will be avoided by adjusting elements of the activities, changing the design and/or implementing mitigation measures.

The impacts of climate change in Madhesh Province include increased temperatures, an increase in the number of extremely hot days in a year, higher occurrence of erratic and untimely rain causing frequent droughts and recurrent flood events, and increased risk of disease and pests to crops and livestock. These changes have made agriculture activities and agri-based enterprises a riskier livelihood. For example, rain during the rice harvest in 2021 resulted in the loss of Nepali Rupee (NPR) 11.87 billion [USD 97 million] for farmers,²⁷ mainly in Province 1 and Madhesh Province. The occurrence of drought and flooding is increasing and directly impacts low land areas, such as those where the JP RWEE will be implemented. The programme will provide climate resilient inputs, technologies and training; and promote risk-management strategies including crop/livestock insurance for smallholder farmers. Likewise, green-recovery jobs such as short-term employment in construction/rehabilitation of resilient building community assets (like water harvesting pond, bio engineering to control flood/landslide, establishment of community nursery, plantation at the river bank/rural agricultural trails) will provide short term social security to vulnerable households. The probable impact of the JP RWEE in terms of environmental sustainability is expected to be positive as it will build the capacity of women farmers to select appropriate production inputs, such as climate resilient crop varieties, the use of technologies to cope with possible losses, technologies such as irrigation water management, and integrated pest management. Likewise, the programme will also enhance women's capacity to assess climatic risks, identify adaptation gaps and plan adaptative interventions.

12. Overall Budget





PROGRAMME BUDGET					
CATEGORY	FAO	IFAD	WFP	UN Women	TOTAL
1. Staff and other personnel costs	\$150,000	\$164,000	\$174,888	\$235,836	\$724,724
2. Supplies, commodities and materials	\$582,000	\$5,000	\$6,366.66	\$10,000	\$ 603,366.66

²⁷ Nayapatrika, 29 October 2021

3. Equipment, vehicles and furniture, including depreciation	\$5,000		\$25,000		\$30,000
4. Contractual services	\$92,282	\$883,745	\$75,000	\$1,195,370	\$2,246,397
5. Travel	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$14,000	\$10,000	\$ 64,000
6. Training, workshop, consultation, transfers and grants counterparts	\$169,802		\$723,789.94		\$ 893,591.94
7. General operating and other direct costs	\$25,000	\$13,400	\$67,500	\$10,000.00	\$ 115,900
Total programme costs	\$1,044,084	\$1,086,145	\$1,086,544.60	\$1,461,206	\$4,677,979.6
8. Indirect support costs (cannot exceed 7%)	\$73,086	\$76,025 (7%)	\$70,625.40 (6.5%)	\$102,284	\$322,020.4
TOTAL	\$1,117,170	\$1,162,170	\$1,157,170	\$1,563,490	\$5,000,000

13. Names and Signatures of Participating UN Organizations

Name: Mr. Ken Shimizu

<p> (On behalf of FAO)</p>	<p>Title: FAO Representative for Nepal and Bhutan Date: 1 June 2022</p>
<p> (On behalf of IFAD)</p>	<p>Name: Mr. Roshan Cooke Title: Country Director Date: 2 June 2022</p>
<p> 02 June 2022 (On behalf of WFP)</p>	<p>Name: Mr. Robert Kasca Title: Representative and Country Director Date:</p>
<p>DocuSigned by:  (On behalf of UN Women)</p>	<p>Name: Navanita Sinha Title: Head of Office, a.i. Date: 31-May-2022 7:16 AM EDT</p>

