



FUND LEVEL CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2023



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I. Executive Summary

The Rwanda SDG Fund brings together various UN entities and their partners to strengthen planning and coordination processes, provide investments for SDG acceleration, improve coherence, reduce fragmentation and transaction costs, and promote the uptake of innovative modes of financing. Further, the fund mobilizes and allocates additional resources to fund activities under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2018-2024) which supports the national sustainable development agenda of Rwanda.

In 2023, UN Rwanda received funding from various donors to support eight Joint Programmes (JPs), listed below. The annual progress reports of each of the Joint Programmes are available on the MPTF Office Gateway page on the Rwanda SDG Fund. (<https://mptf.undp.org/fund/rw200>).

- (1) **The Joint Programme on Gender** made important progress in supporting the government's efforts to translate gender equality commitments into concrete actions, including the development of strategic documents, strengthening women's leadership networks, and building institutional capacities through training programs.
- (2) **The Joint Programme on Sustainable Cities** contributed to creating decent employment, enhancing entrepreneurial capabilities of local artisans and cooperatives, and strengthening the strategic framework for infrastructure development.
- (3) **The Joint Nutrition Programme** key achievements include continued support to the National Child Development Agency, increased participation of the private sector, enhanced capacity for service delivery at the decentralized level, and improved access to animal source food and resources to overcome financial barriers.
- (4) **The Joint Programme on Data** provided technical and financial support for the 2022 Population and Housing Census, supported the development of a data quality control system, and built stakeholder capacities in data analysis, dissemination, and use.
- (5) **The Joint Programme on Climate Resilience** promoted bio-farming techniques, supported integrated rice and fish farming, facilitated the establishment of sustainable rural settlements, and improved national and local capacities for early warning, disaster prevention, and climate change adaptation.
- (6) **The Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment** made progress in establishing Farmer Field and Life Schools, Village Saving and Loan Associations, creating tree nurseries, strengthening climate-resilient agriculture skills, and enhancing the agri-entrepreneurship and business skills of rural women.

(7) The Joint Programme on Youth facilitated the creation of 1,510 jobs and enhanced the skills of 1,102 young entrepreneurs, with a focus on marginalized groups. Additionally, initiatives like the YouthConnekt Africa Summit and career orientation fairs engaged thousands of youths, while the "Passport to Earning" platform provided digital learning and employment support.

(8) The Joint Programme on MSMEs focuses on supporting firms at all growth stages, aligning with Rwanda's Vision 2050, NST1, and EDP 2020-25. In 2023, the programme identified key priority areas, developed action plans, and hired experts. It aims to address challenges and opportunities for MSMEs, particularly in accessing finance, to enhance their capacity for sustainable growth. The programme supports youth entrepreneurship through initiatives like Youth Connect Africa and aims to encourage skilled and educated youth to engage in MSME development.

The UN in Rwanda expresses its sincere gratitude to its donors, Sida, SDC, and the Government of the Netherlands, for their substantial contributions to Rwanda's development and the advancement of the SDGs through the cooperation framework and joint programs.

II. Purpose

The UN Joint Programmes (JPs) are aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2018-2024 and contribute to various outcomes and outputs related to economic transformation, social transformation, and transformational governance. Aligned with the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), these JPs support Rwanda's development priorities while striving to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and advance the country's overall transformation agenda.

III. Key Results

The UN in Rwanda which received funding through MPTF made significant strides in promoting gender equality and combating gender-based violence. It facilitated leadership training that enabled 38 young women to earn seats in local councils. Additionally, 216 women from 11 political parties received enhanced leadership capacities, increasing their role in electoral processes. The revamped African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) Rwanda chapter empowered 250 women leaders. Efforts were made to raise awareness, with over 108,638 individuals and 26 media outlets increasing their understanding of gender-based violence prevention, response, and reporting mechanisms. The capacity of 5,183 service providers was strengthened to better support survivors of gender-based violence, including the establishment of a toll-free line for reporting cases. Furthermore, 148 "Men Engage" champions were established to promote women's rights protection.



Photo: RWLN Summit - Launch of AWWN Rwanda Chapter, 1st March 2023. @ Photo, UN Women.

The fund focused on skills development, with 30 tailors across 20 cooperatives, as per the planned target, receiving advanced business and e-commerce training, leading to increased online sales and improved business sustainability. Another 30 tailors were trained on business improvement and financial literacy, enhancing their entrepreneurial and financial management skills. Moreover, 47 staff members within the employment ecosystem received training on decent work practices, social protection, and social dialogue. This achievement aligns with the planned target and the indicator ‘Number of staff in the employment ecosystem specifically in the City of Kigali capacitated to ensure effective implementation of the national employment policy in response to new developments in employment and COVID-19 crisis recovery’.

Moreover, the funding received through MPTF scaled up the child score card monitoring tool from 57% and 55.9% of children under two in two districts. Efforts were made to enhance household nutrition, with the distribution of 14,124 egg-laying chickens to 3,531 households with children under two reaching more households than planned (3250 households). Notably, 2,026 Village Savings and Lending Associations were established, representing 50,000 community members and promoting financial inclusion. Peer-to-peer support on optimal nutrition practices, including increased consumption of animal-source foods, led to substantial improvements in dietary diversity and minimum acceptable diets.

In data and statistics, the 5th Population and Housing Census was successfully completed and disseminated, producing 18 thematic reports and 30 district profiles. It strengthened sectoral data systems, including the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system, with the development of Standard Operating Procedures. Training was provided for academia, researchers, district statisticians, and journalists on data analysis, evidence-based storytelling, and statistical literacy.

The availability and monitoring of health-related SDG indicators increased from 70% in 2021 to 82% in 2023, as measured by the indicator '% of SDG indicators for which data is available and monitored'.

In climate resilience, three solar-powered irrigation systems were installed benefiting 45,000 farmers in three districts. It trained 2,821 farmers from 6 cooperatives on agroforestry practices, leading to the cultivation of 18,254 agroforestry trees, diversifying incomes and reducing reliance on synthetic fertilizers. Furthermore, 2,364 farmers (1,838 women, 526 men) were trained on climate-resilient agriculture and essential life skills through 75 Farmer Field and Life Schools groups.



Solar powered irrigation system in Kayonza district @FAO.



Farmers grafting trainings in COVAMABA cooperative in Rulindo district @FAO.

The Joint Programme on women's economic empowerment enrolled 9,101 individuals, with an emphasis on women's participation (7,342 women). It established 75 Farmer Field and Life Schools groups, facilitating training for 32 facilitators and 2,364 farmers in climate-resilient agricultural practices and essential life skills. Income-generating activities focused on avocado production and chicken rearing, leading to the establishment of 47 tree nurseries and the anticipated distribution of 20,136 chickens to improve nutrition in vulnerable districts. Additionally, 459 individuals received entrepreneurship and business management skills training, while 100 women were trained on tax laws to facilitate engagement in larger markets.

Youth empowerment efforts facilitated the 6th annual YouthConnekt Africa Summit, engaging 15,000 young people. It provided digital literacy and entrepreneurship training to over 400 young women through initiatives like the Rwanda Career Women Centre, with 80% securing employment or starting their own businesses. The Fund successfully created 1,510 jobs for young men and women, achieving the planned target of enhancing the capacity of 1,102 young entrepreneurs through business development support. This achievement aligns with the indicator that measures increased employability, job-related skills, and entrepreneurship knowledge among youth. It also organized career orientation fairs for over 7,600 youth across all provinces to facilitate the transition from school to work and launched the "Passport to Earning" digital learning.



YouthConnekt bootcamp, 24-28 November 2023 @UNDP

IV. Challenges, Lessons learnt & best practices.

Challenges

- **Budget Constraints and Funding Uncertainties:** Programs faced financial limitations, impacting their scope and ability to fully achieve objectives. Particularly, the JP on Gender underwent a budget cut, significantly affecting its operations.
- **Operational Challenges:** The JP on Nutrition had to adjust due to COVID-19 and natural disasters, redirecting funds to emergency support. The JP on Climate Resilience also reported delays and disruptions due to COVID-19.
- **Data Collection Issues:** The JP on Data highlighted challenges in estimating maternal mortality due to data quality issues.
- **Land Ownership and Time Constraints:** For the JP on Climate Resilience, lack of land ownership among youth and tight project timelines posed significant challenges.
- **Cross-Border Tensions:** The JP on DRC/Rwanda faced challenges in cross-border trade and social cohesion due to deteriorating diplomatic relations.

Lessons Learned

- **Multi-Sectoral Approaches:** Emphasized by the JP on Gender, leveraging partnerships across sectors enhances program effectiveness.
- **Community Engagement:** Engagement with community and religious leaders, as noted in multiple JPs, fosters a supportive environment for project implementation.
- **SMART Indicators and Planning:** The importance of clear, achievable indicators and comprehensive planning at project outset for smooth execution.

Best Practices

- **Collaboration and Synergies:** Highlighted across JPs, collaboration among UN agencies, government, and local partners is key to achieving broader development goals.
- **Group Approaches:** Supporting women through groups rather than individuals, as seen in the JP on RWEE, facilitates sustainable and transformative change.
- **Experience Sharing:** Exchange visits among beneficiaries promote knowledge transfer and skill development, fostering learning and innovation.

V. Stories

As the sun curved in over the hilly landscape in southern Rwanda, a team of the joint UN programme for rural women economic empowerment (JP RWEE) met Agnes Nibakure. She, a 43-year-old woman, and her husband Emmanuel Bucumi are beneficiaries of the programme supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. “The family journey had been marked by some conflicts, rooted in lack of self-confidence to manage the little resources we have including the livestock and food at home,” she said.



Agnes Nibakure holds one of the baskets ready to sell to the local market.

Hailing from Rango village, Runyombyi cell, Busanze sector of Nyaruguru district, Agnes got married and started a family at a tender age of 16, with limited knowledge on women’s empowerment. She is now a member of the cooperative Amahoro, comprised of 20 resilient women and 10 supportive men who were transformed by JP RWEE.

Thanks to the training on gender equality and women empowerment provided by JP RWEE, she said: “My life was transformed as I and my colleagues were enlightened, we are no longer victims of domestic violence.” Agnes found a new strength within herself. The conflicts were so severe that her husband had fled home but was motivated by his spouse’s success to return.

The turning point came when Agnes joined the savings group formed as part of the JP RWEE initiative. With a small loan of 10,000 Rwandan francs (RWF, about USD 8) from the savings group, Agnes kickstarted a small-scale business selling potatoes, baskets, and plastic containers in the village market. In just three months, Agnes not only repaid the loan but also doubled her profit.

With her entrepreneurial spirit ignited by JP RWEE, Agnes had bigger dreams. She rented a small piece of land and cultivated beans, yielding 30 kilograms for home consumption and earning a steady income from her various ventures. She aspired to register her business, create a brand, and ultimately become a recognized entrepreneur in Rwanda. She hopes to purchase land for agriculture and renovate their home. Her vision extends to buying a bicycle for Emmanuel to reduce transportation costs and streamline their business operations.



Agnes Nibakure and her husband Emmanuel pose for a photo with their children at home. Photo: WFP/JohnPaul

Meanwhile, her husband Emmanuel works in a tea plantation, earning a monthly income of 35,000 RWF. They now live together peacefully, and he became a supportive partner due to the JP RWEE's training on Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) led by IFAD. He takes charge of household duties even when Agnes is away on business trips. Their shared dream of owning land and improving their living conditions continues, despite the loss of their small plot of land taken away by flooding in 2022 down in the valley.