

ACCELERATING PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN
BI-ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT
REPORTING PERIOD: 1 JANUARY – 30 JUNE 2024

<p style="text-align: center;">Programme Title & Project Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Title: Accelerating Progress Toward Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in Nepal MPTF Office Project Reference Number: 00132318 	<p style="text-align: center;">Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results</p> <p>Nepal: One Municipality and Four Rural Municipalities from Saptari and Siraha districts of Madhesh Province.</p> <p><u>Saptari:</u> - Rural Municipalities: Tilathi Koiladi and Chinnamasta</p> <p><u>Siraha:</u> -Rural Municipalities: Laxmipur Patari, Sakhuwanankarkatti -Municipalities: Karjanha</p> <p>Direct beneficiaries for 2024: 3,300 (3,000 women, 300 men) Indirect beneficiaries for 2024: 10,750 Total programme beneficiaries: 6,000 (5,500 women, 500 men)</p> <p>Strategic Results: a) improved food security and nutrition; b) increased income, decent work and economic autonomy; c) enhanced participation and leadership in rural life and institutions; and d) more gender-responsive policy environment.</p>														
<p style="text-align: center;">Participating Organization(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO IFAD UN Women WFP 	<p style="text-align: center;">Implementing Partners</p> <p>Government: <u>Federal level</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development <u>Provincial level</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperatives <u>Local Level</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> participating five Local Governments Civil Society: DidiBahini, Support Activities for Poor Producers of Nepal, Center for Agro-Forestry Technology, National People Welfare Council</p>														
<p style="text-align: center;">Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</p> <p>Total approved budget as per project document: US\$ 5 Million for five years MPTF Contribution US\$ 5 Million for five years <u>Contribution for 2024</u></p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>• FAO</td> <td style="text-align: right;">US\$ 246,635</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• IFAD</td> <td style="text-align: right;">US\$ 187,250</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• WFP</td> <td style="text-align: right;">US\$ 200,060</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• UN Women</td> <td style="text-align: right;">US\$ 141,240</td> </tr> </table> <p>by Agency (if applicable) Agency Contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> by Agency (if applicable) <p>• Government Contribution (if applicable)</p> <p>Other Contributions (donors) (if applicable)</p> <p>TOTAL: US\$ 775,185</p>	• FAO	US\$ 246,635	• IFAD	US\$ 187,250	• WFP	US\$ 200,060	• UN Women	US\$ 141,240	<p style="text-align: center;">Programme Duration</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Overall Duration</td> <td style="text-align: right;">5 years</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Start Date</td> <td style="text-align: right;">25/05/22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>End Date:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">24/05/27</td> </tr> </table>	Overall Duration	5 years	Start Date	25/05/22	End Date:	24/05/27
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<p style="text-align: center;">Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Evaluation</p> <p>Assessment/Review - if applicable <i>please attach</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Date: dd.mm.yyyy</p> <p>Mid-Term Evaluation Report – if applicable <i>please attach</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Date: dd.mm.yyyy</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Report Submitted By</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Mehtap Tatar Title: Deputy Country Representative Participating Organization (Lead): UN Women Email address: mehtap.tatar@unwomen.org 														



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Investing in rural people



World Food
Programme



NARRATIVE REPORT FORMAT

I. Summary

The JPRWEE program in Nepal is progressing well for 2024. Out of 39 planned activities, 5 (13%) are complete, 23 (59%) are underway, and the remaining are scheduled for later in the year. Of the 18 carryover activities from 2023, 1 is complete, 10 are in progress, and 7 have not yet started. Activities under Outcome 4, which involve gender-responsive budgeting and policy dialogues, face delays due to the need for extensive coordination with government entities.

Significant progress has been made under Outcome 1, with seven key interventions advancing food security and nutrition. Over 3,290 women gained access to climate-resistant seeds and agricultural production skills, representing a 42% increase since December 2023. Nutrition Field Schools have enhanced dietary diversity for 360 women, with 88% establishing home gardens. Community resilience was bolstered by deep borehole construction in Karjanha Municipality, funded with a 30% contribution from the local government.

Outcome 2 has strengthened economic autonomy through Financial Education and Business Literacy for 2,384 participants and established a food supply chain linking 1,091 farmers with school kitchens. In Siraha and Saptari, 150 farmers have reduced their workload thanks to machinery provided by two Custom Hiring Service Centers. Outcome 3 saw enhanced leadership and advocacy skills for 23 women, increased local governance involvement for 149 participants, and the creation of 40 new farmers' groups with 1,019 members. The Gender Action Learning System (GALS) training reached 400 households, improving women's decision-making and community roles.

Under Outcome 4, despite some delays in preparatory activities, there has been progress in gender and digital literacy. A total of 434 participants, including 417 women, were reached through sessions on women's rights and legal frameworks. The program has also initiated capacity-building and international learning on GALS and Financial Education and Business Literacy (FEBL) to support the development of gender-responsive policies and women's empowerment.

II. Results

Outcome 1: Improved food security and nutrition for rural women and their households that contribute to equitable and sustainable food systems.

As of June 2024, of the eight planned interventions under Outcome 1 for this year, one has been completed as planned, and seven have been initiated and on track.

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

In the reporting period, 3,433 farmers, including 3,290 women, gained access to climate-resistant paddy seeds and enhanced their technical skills, leading to improved agricultural productivity and income generation. This represents an increase of 1,019 farmers compared to 2023. The Nutrition Field Schools (NFS), established to address malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women and children under five, continued to deliver impactful sessions throughout 2023.

Established to address malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies, particularly among pregnant, lactating women and children below 5 years of age, the Nutrition Field Schools (NFS) have continued to help women

improve their well-being from 2023. A total of 360 women (up by one from the previous report) from diverse backgrounds—including 166 Dalit, 63 Janajati, 16 Muslim, and 115 other Madhesi—enhanced their knowledge of dietary requirements, promoting better health and nutrition. Following comprehensive training, 319 out of 360 women farmers established home gardens drawing inspiration from two model gardens supported by the programme in Chinnamasta and Laxmipur Patari Rural Municipalities

These gardens feature a variety of seasonal vegetables, fruits, and moringa saplings, contributing to dietary diversity and improved nutrition. Additionally, new 41 programme participants gained access to irrigation facilities, supported by the installation of three deep boreholes in Karjanha Municipality. These boreholes, covering over 20 hectares, provide a reliable water source crucial for agriculture amid increasingly unpredictable weather and building overall climate resiliency in this location. After the installation of the boreholes, farmers plan to shift traditional cropping patterns from rice-wheat-fallow to rice-vegetable/wheat-vegetable, which will intensify cropping density, improve productivity, and provide cash-generating opportunities for women farmers. The local government contributed 30% of the total budget for the borehole installations.

Between January and June 2024, 1,347 new program participants (1,296 women and 51 men) accessed information on climate/weather patterns, agricultural advisories, and market systems through apps such as Smart Krishi, Geo Krishi, and the Government Agricultural Management Information System (AMIS). Since December 2023, the total number of participants has reached 1,990. Given the literacy levels of participants, program staff provided support by assisting with app downloads and demonstrating their use in local languages. Follow-up sessions with 63 existing groups from 2023, involving 1,394 participants (1,371 women), continued to support effective use of AMIS for enhanced agricultural practices and market engagement. Approximately 18% of participants reported using the provided information for their agricultural and market decisions.

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.

In the reporting period, additional 1,440 rural farmers (1,373 women) for a total of 2151 participants (2017) women since 2023 continuing gaining advanced skills in agricultural production techniques, marking an increase of 729 since the previous report in 2023. Through targeted technical support and extension services, participants learned to: (1) prepare organic fertilizers and bio-pesticides using locally available herbs and organic products; (2) implement nursery raising techniques to boost production; (3) apply disease and pest control methods without chemicals; and (4) adopt a comprehensive package of agricultural practices.

During the reporting period, existing 1,715 program participants (1,649 women) from 60 farmers' groups attended 60 interactive half-day follow-up orientation sessions aimed at improving household diets. This builds on the 1,772 participants reached in 2023, with these sessions specifically deepening their knowledge on nutrition, sustainable consumption, and related practices. Topics covered included nutritional requirements, healthy diet planning, malnutrition classification, sustainable farming practices, and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH). Approximately 80 percent of participants reported actively applying the knowledge gained to grow more nutritious crops and have adopted recommended nutritional practices, such as changes in dietary habits, food choices, meal preparation techniques, and the frequency of consuming nutritious foods.

25 Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) events held in Tilathi Kolathi and Laxmipur Patari Rural Municipalities covering 760 school children (436 girls aged of 8-13 years) have enhanced knowledge

on nutrition, food habits and WASH. These students are the indirect beneficiaries for the programme where practical demonstration sessions were conducted displaying healthy foods versus junk foods educating students to adopt healthier and more informed lifestyles. Additionally, A radio jingle in Maithili was also developed and broadcasted to raise awareness about WASH, the benefits of consuming locally grown, healthy, balanced diets and the consequences of consumption of unhealthy food targeting mass audience

Four Construction Management Committees (CMCs), consisting of 32 members (31 women and 1 man), were established to oversee the creation of climate-resilient, labor-intensive community assets. These committees were formed to develop local ownership of the infrastructure and ensure transparency in the construction process. Specifically, one CMC in Laxmipur Patari Rural Municipality is managing the construction of an agriculture collection center, while three CMCs in Karjanha Municipality are overseeing the construction of deep boreholes. The Karjanha CMCs, comprising 25 participants (23 women and 2 men), have implemented key safety, security, and administrative protocols, guided by pre-construction training sessions.

Additionally, two interactive workshops on "Climate-Resilient Food Systems" engaged 74 government officials and elected representatives from Laxmipur Patari and Karjanha Municipalities. These workshops facilitated discussions on the climate crisis's global, national, and local impacts, emphasizing the urgent need for adaptation strategies. The workshops led to a commitment to develop a local adaptation plan in the upcoming fiscal years, addressing climate change's effects on food security and livelihoods.

Outcome 2: Rural women's income, decent work and economic autonomy are increased to secure their livelihoods and build resilience.

Under Outcome 2, the project had planned 12 interventions for the year. Seven of these were carried over from 2023. During the reporting period, six of the carried-over interventions were initiated, with one still pending. Out of the interventions that were started, two have been completed. Likewise, of the five newly planned activities for 2024, four have been started, with one scheduled for the second half of the year."

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

As of June 2024, 30 women farmers from all five municipalities have been trained as facilitators in Financial Education and Business Literacy (FEBL) modules, including the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) 'lite'. This approach fosters interaction and reflection within households by engaging both men and boys, enhancing learning for both illiterate and literate participants. Following their training, these facilitators have shared their knowledge through community-level sessions across all 13 wards of the five municipalities. To date, 2,384 individuals (2,308 women) from 82 farmers' groups have benefited from FEBL sessions led by these facilitators. This represents an increase of 249 participants since the last reporting period in 2023.

The Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) approach successfully linked 1,091 women farmers with community schools, transitioning from commitments made in 2023 to active supply agreements in 2024. In April 2024, 38 women farmers' groups from Siraha and Saptari districts finalized Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with 37 schools for regular food supplies. This arrangement, effective from May 2024, ensured a sustainable supply chain and price mechanisms. By June 2024, these farmers delivered 501 kg of food commodities to the schools, valued at NPR 20,506 (USD 154.18).

Output 2.2: Rural women have enhanced capacities, skills and time for entrepreneurship and access to markets and value chains.

Newly reached 150 women farmers (90 in Siraha and 60 in Saptari)—benefited from reduced workload and drudgery during the land preparation and paddy planting season through access to modern agricultural equipment provided by two Custom Hiring Service Centres. Each centre was equipped with 19 pieces of machinery and tools, chosen through a consultative, gender-sensitive process involving both rural women and men farmers. The selected equipment is user-friendly for women and requires minimal maintenance. Beneficiary feedback confirms that these tools have lowered operational costs and boosted farm productivity.

Newly reached 3,433 program participants (3,290 women) from 120 farmers' groups formed in 2023 across five municipalities have improved their understanding of social security schemes provided by the Government of Nepal, including allowances for people with disabilities, single women, and senior citizens. The program has actively supported participants in registering for these schemes and accessing government allowances. Notably, the program assisted Mr. Chulahi Yadav from Sakhuwanankarkatti-3, Siraha, in obtaining a 'D' category disability card. Efforts are ongoing to secure a disability card for a female participant from the same municipality.

The comprehensive assessment of gender-responsive social care infrastructure, which began in 2023 and continued into 2024, was successfully completed. The assessment focused on several key areas such as identifying opportunities and challenges for enhancing rural women's access to formal employment through better social care infrastructure and uncovering obstacles that prevent women from taking on leadership roles. The findings will serve as a crucial advocacy tool to promote investment in social care infrastructure and address unpaid care work, aiming to enhance women's labour force participation and inform policy interventions. (*See Annex II for the full report and Annex III for the policy brief.*)

Output 2.3: Rural women have increased access to gender-responsive financial and business development services, ICTs and other products and services.

In Siraha and Saptari districts, newly reached 1,164 farmers' group members (1,127 women and 37 men), including 442 Dalit, 224 Janajati, 461 Madhesi, 25 Muslim, and 12 Brahmin/Chhetri, increased their awareness through 30 referral orientation and 19 legal aid orientation sessions. These sessions covered local services, referral systems, legal services, vital registration, and gender and social norms.

Additionally, 13 rural women farmers (6 Dalit, 5 Janajati, and 2 Madhesi) from the targeted municipalities continued to enhance their knowledge through training on psychosocial counseling. They focused on understanding gender and social-related issues, various forms of violence, and their effects on mental health. The training included case studies, interactions, role plays, and communication skills development, aiming to improve their ability to handle cases of gender-based violence and mental health issues, as well as promoting self-care and overall well-being.

Under this output, newly reached 148 programme participants (141 women) from five farmer groups—including 76 Dalit, 25 Janajati, 15 people with disabilities (direct beneficiaries: 1, family members: 14), 12 single women, and 1 GBV survivor—enhanced their knowledge in digital literacy and information technology. They learned to use mobile applications for agro-advisory services, market-related information, and digital banking services such as ATMs, mobile banking, SMS banking, internet banking, and POS systems as a result of the delivered training. Initially, participants were unfamiliar with digital financial platforms, but they have now acquired essential operational skills. Mapping 19 banks and financial institutions (3 banks, 10 MFIs, 6 cooperatives) in the programme areas will not show immediate changes but will establish a crucial link for future access to credit. This mapping will facilitate connections between participants and financial institutions, supporting their agri-business needs.

A total of 1,347 farmers (including 1,293 women) participated in 48 comprehensive orientation sessions on crop and livestock insurance. This represents a 68% increase in the number of farmers reached compared to 2023. The sessions, held in collaboration with insurance companies, covered topics such as insurance premiums, maturity processes, and the calculation of 80% subsidies on agriculture insurance premiums for various crops and livestock. As a result, 279 farmers obtained livestock insurance policies to safeguard against risks like crop failure and livestock loss due to natural calamities and diseases. Notably, one woman farmer received NPR 9,000 (USD 67.66) as an insurance claim for a goat she had insured.

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.

Under outcome three, 10 interventions were planned for this year, with seven carried over from 2023. As of June 2024, one has been completed, two have been initiated, and four carried-over activities remain outstanding. Of the three newly planned activities for 2024, two have been started, and one is scheduled for the second half of the year. All initiated interventions aim to develop voice and agency, collective action, and leadership capacity to increase rural women's representation in local governance structures. During the reporting period, a total of 1,216 participants were newly reached, of whom 1,073 were women.

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

As of June 2024, newly reached 23 rural women farmers (9 Dalit, 6 Janajati, 1 Muslim, and 7 Madhesi) completed a Master Training of Trainers in comprehensive leadership development, receiving credentials as change agents. This training deepened their understanding of social norms, women's rights, gender equality, public speaking, dialogue, negotiation skills, policies, and leadership roles. They learned the seven-step planning process¹, how to advocate for their needs and rights, and how to secure local government funding.

Additionally, 149 participants (61 women, including 28 Dalit, 12 Janajati, 2 Muslim, 98 Madhesi, and 9 Brahmin/Chhetri) enhanced their knowledge of local governance structures through three network and coordination meetings. Local leaders committed to increasing rural women's participation in governance and decision-making. This outreach represents a 126% increase compared to 2023, where 112 women were covered.

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.

1,019 new participants (964 women) with an increase of 40% compared to previous reporting period in 2023, were organized into 40 farmers' groups. Each of these farmers' groups learned group management skills and is actively conducting monthly meetings where they focus on strategic discussion, share progress and learnings, resolve any group issues and challenges, and make key decisions on group savings and other matters. The participants are reportedly more united and are offering support to their peers group members. This has made women farmers more confident, vocal, and recognized, opening the gate to explore the world beyond their household and community. Moreover, farmers' groups were oriented on how to access the available resources and services for agricultural activities from their respective municipality

¹ The seven-step planning process involves a structured approach to effective planning and implementation, including: 1) Setting objectives, 2) Assessing needs and resources, 3) Identifying strategies and actions, 4) Developing a detailed plan, 5) Implementing the plan, 6) Monitoring progress, and 7) Evaluating outcomes. This methodology ensures comprehensive and systematic planning, enabling participants to effectively advocate for their needs and secure necessary resources.

in order to enhance agricultural production of these smallholder women farmers. The programme is also advocating with officials of the respective municipalities to allocate ample resources and services for agricultural development.

Fifty women in total, double from the previous reporting period in 2023, participated in Gender Action Learning System (GALS) trainings. Of these, 25 women completed both the catalyst and training-of-trainers workshops and are now coaching and mentoring the most vulnerable women at the household and small group levels using their GALS knowledge. The remaining 25 facilitators completed the GALS Catalyst Workshop² and are applying their learnings to their own lives. As a result, a total of 400 vulnerable and disadvantaged households (an increase of 223 since 2023) are now receiving GALS training through the guidance of these 50 trained facilitators (25 existing and 25 new).

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.

As of June 2024, out of the nine planned interventions, one was completed, and only two were initiated to support cross-learning on GALS (Gender Action Learning System) through learning routes and to enhance the knowledge of women farmers on gender and digital literacy. Of these, three interventions were carried over from 2023, and all activities from 2023 remain outstanding. During the reporting period, a total of 434 participants were newly reached, of whom 417 were women.

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.

No output-level results were achieved during this reporting period as all three activities, such as capacity-strengthening trainings on gender-responsive planning, the need for generating gender-responsive disaster-resilient agriculture development policies (including social protection coverage for all farmers), and policy dialogues, are still at the preparatory stage and has been re-planned in the second half of 2024. This has been rescheduled for Q4 now. We have just finished the Gap Analysis in consultation with all three tier of government and this will be the basis for developing training content and materials to deliver GRB trainings.

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.

A total of newly reached 434 participants (417 women), including 88 Dalit (20%), 147 Janajati (34%), 37 persons with disabilities (9 participants and 28 family members), 43 single women (10%), and 8 GBV survivors, from 15 women farmers' groups, enhanced their knowledge on gender and legal literacy through peer-to-peer facilitation sessions. These sessions covered women's rights and key legal frameworks, including the Industrial Enterprise Act, President Women Upliftment Program (PWUP), National Gender Equality Policy, national women's machinery, Prime Minister Employment Programme, and the 15th Periodic Plan. Additionally, a learning route on Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology and Financial Education and Business Literacy (FEBL) was organized with 8 international and 3 national participants³. This route focused on GALS and FEBL as methodologies for women's empowerment, emphasizing how to effect change in household power dynamics and communities (see Annex IV for details on the GALS methodology and FEBL learning route).

² A GALS Catalyst Workshop is a foundational training component within the Gender Action Learning System (GALS). It's designed to equip participants with essential skills and knowledge to facilitate gender equality and empowerment processes at the community level.

³ Learning Routes involved participants from following organizations; (i) IFAD headquarters, Tanzania, Laos and Nepal offices, (ii) NPCO, AFN II, Laos, (iii) Yess Financial Inclusion and Training Officer, Indonesia, and (iv) SAPPROS, Nepal

III. Describe any delays in implementation, challenges, lessons learned, successes.

Delays in implementation

Under Outcome 1, technical issues caused **delays in the budget release** from the Government's office for the collection centre in Laxmipur Patari Rural Municipality, pushing the budget to the next fiscal year, 2024/2025. The local government's role in managing initial construction materials also contributed to further delays. Additionally, the development and dissemination of knowledge products faced setbacks due to the paddy planting rainy season, with a revised timeline now set for October 2024. Under Outcome 3, construction of the agriculture market collection centre faced delays due to a **land dispute** between local residents and Laxmipur Patari Municipality. While the dispute has been resolved, the construction timeline has been extended from September 2024 to November 2024.

The timeline for activities under Output 4.1 has been re-planned due to the need for **extensive preparation and consultations with government** officials at multiple levels. Similarly, activities planned with IFAD, WFP, and FAO, such as sensitization campaigns, community dialogues, and the construction of an agriculture market centre, have been delayed and are now scheduled for the second half of the year. However, preparatory work has been underway to ensure these activities can proceed as planned.

Challenges included navigating political influences affecting group formation and program assistance distribution, which was addressed through regular orientations and visits to educate political leaders about the program's objectives. Managing high community expectations required early and ongoing engagement to align these expectations with the program's scope. Additionally, the farming season led to delays in some activities, necessitating adjustments to scheduling based on rural women's availability. **Lessons learned** highlight the importance of joint review meetings and monitoring visits with Participating UN Organizations, local government representatives, and community members to ensure smooth and effective program implementation.

IV. Insert the completed Performance Indicator Table

No changes recorded since Annual report 2023. Outcome and output level indicators are measured at the end of the planning year.