

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

Programme title and project number	Country, locality(ies), priority area(s) / Strategic outcomes												
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accelerating progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women in Niger MPTF office project reference number: 00132319 	<p>Niger <i>Territories where the JP RWEE is implemented</i></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Regions</th><th style="text-align: center;">departments</th><th style="text-align: center;">Council area</th></tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Dosso</td><td style="text-align: center;">Boboye</td><td style="text-align: center;">Fabidji Kankandi</td></tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Maradi</td><td style="text-align: center;">Dokoro Gazaoua</td><td style="text-align: center;">Tagriss Gazaoua</td></tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">Programme beneficiaries</p> <p>Total direct beneficiaries: 12,000 women and 3,000 men Total indirect beneficiaries: 105,000 women and men Direct beneficiaries 2024: 8405 women and 2466 men</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Implementation partners</p> <p>National counterpart:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Public Health, Population and Social Action Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock High Commission for the 3N Initiative National NGOs: AEDL; ALHERI; Plateforme paysanne DIKO, Paix et Developpement Wedditaare (PED/W NGO) <p style="text-align: center;">Programme duration</p> <p>Total duration: 5 years</p> <p>Start date: 25/05/22 Closing date: 24/05/27</p>	Regions	departments	Council area	Dosso	Boboye	Fabidji Kankandi	Maradi	Dokoro Gazaoua	Tagriss Gazaoua			
Regions	departments	Council area											
Dosso	Boboye	Fabidji Kankandi											
Maradi	Dokoro Gazaoua	Tagriss Gazaoua											
<p style="text-align: center;">Participating organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO IFAD UN Women WFP 	<p style="text-align: center;">Report submitted by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Abdourahamane IdrissaHarouna Title: MEAL Specialist, JP RWEE Niger Participating Organization (Lead): FAO Email: Abdourahamane.IdrissaHarouna@fao.org 												
<p style="text-align: center;">Programme/Project cost (US\$)</p> <p>Total budget approved as per description project: MPTF Contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> by Agency (if applicable) <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">FAO</td><td style="text-align: right;">\$819,044</td><td style="text-align: center;">UN Women</td><td style="text-align: right;">\$386,525</td></tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">IFAD</td><td style="text-align: right;">\$346,339</td><td style="text-align: center;">WFP</td><td style="text-align: right;">\$296,565</td></tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Total</td><td colspan="3" style="text-align: right;">\$1,848,473.00</td></tr> </table> <p>Agency Contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> by Agency (if applicable) <p>TOTAL: USD\$ 5,000,000</p>	FAO	\$819,044	UN Women	\$386,525	IFAD	\$346,339	WFP	\$296,565	Total	\$1,848,473.00			<p style="text-align: center;">Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.</p> <p>Assessment/Review - if applicable <i>please attach</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes No <input type="checkbox"/> e: dd.mm.yyyy</p> <p>Mid-Term Evaluation Report - <i>if applicable please attach</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, No <input type="checkbox"/> e: dd.mm.yyyy</p>
FAO	\$819,044	UN Women	\$386,525										
IFAD	\$346,339	WFP	\$296,565										
Total	\$1,848,473.00												

I. Summary

The programme has encountered significant delays due to the deteriorating security situation especially in Kankandi and Fabidji, the July 2023 military coup, and JP RWEE leadership gaps, including the departure of the JP RWEE National Coordinator. These challenges have impacted the continuity of project activities and accessibility to the project intervention areas. Despite this, the JPRWEE Technical Committee has proactively held four of the six planned meetings to address these issues and maintain coordination between the PUNO.

In terms of performance in 2024, a total of 58 activities were planned. Of these, 15 were carried over from 2023 to 2024 because they were not finalized, with 5 successfully completed during the reporting period. Additionally, 6 new activities were completed in the first semester, 7 are currently ongoing and 40 have yet to be started. It is planned to implement 31 activities between August and December 2024.

As of June 2024, the programme has made some strides under **Outcome 1** towards improved food security and nutrition of women and their households. Women's access to climate-smart resources and tools has increased significantly due to the distribution of 240 pastoral kits, which has enhanced their agricultural practices. Access to clean water has improved for 2,126 women and 4,000 people overall with the installation of two standpipes. Domestic workloads for 250 women have been alleviated through the provision of ten cattle carts. Although multifunctional community platforms are still being procured, 20 tonnes of livestock feed including pellets and wheat bran have notably enhanced livestock nourishment for 240 women. Furthermore, 42 Farmer Field Schools have upgraded agricultural skills for 1,260 producers, and 400 Local Land Commission's members, including 110 women, are now issuing land tenure certificates.

Under **Outcome 2**, significant progress has been made, including financial literacy training for 200 members of VSLAs, resulting in the establishment of 106 management bodies and the development of 44 trained women agents. Training of 848 women in Producers' Organizations and awareness-raising for 500 participants are expected to strengthen market linkages. Furthermore, two newly established village forestry businesses now provide support to 100 women. Under **Outcome 3**, a total of 337 Dimitra Clubs with 8,485 members (6,019 women) have enhanced their leadership skills, gained recognition for their voices and roles at the community level, and advanced gender equality through their ongoing participation in local decision-making (in JP RWEE and local governance). These groups have addressed water management concerns, participated in the targeting process for animal distribution, and supported women's roles in community leadership."

Progress towards strengthening gender-responsive policies under **Outcome 4** has been slower due to political instability. The capacity of 100 local officials in Dosso and Maradi to engage in gender-sensitive planning and budgeting has been enhanced through a workshop.

II. Results

Outcome 1: The food and nutritional security of rural women and their households is improved, contributing to equitable and sustainable food systems.

Under outcome 1, a total of 24 activities are planned. Of these, 5 were carried over from 2023 to 2024 because not finalized, with 1 of these successfully completed under the reporting period. While new activity 5 were also completed, 2 are currently ongoing and 12 not started yet.

Output 1.1. Increased access to and control over resources, assets, technologies and services essential for climate-smart agricultural production and food and nutritional security.

A major achievement under Output 1.1 was the distribution of new 240 pastoral kits, each comprising two goats and a billy goat to approximately 240 women, most of them widow. This initiative significantly increased women's access to assets and techniques for climate-smart agricultural production and food security. The distribution, which began in 2024, involved establishing local management and activity committees in 40 villages of the four JP RWEE II intervention municipalities. Beneficiaries, including widows and very poor women, were selected based on vulnerability indicators, and the lists were validated through Dimitra Clubs to ensure transparency. Collaboration agreements with local veterinary services (*Services vétérinaires privés de proximité - SVPP*) were established to provide essential care and training in improved animal husbandry, enhancing livestock management. This initiative, although planned for 2023, started in 2024 and will rotate the kits among 720 vulnerable women until 2026, ensuring ongoing support and impact.

Significant strides have been made in improving access to vital resources and services for agricultural production and food security. In Guidan Gazobi, Maradi, two (2) standpipes were installed, providing clean water to the community for a population of 4,000, including 2,126 women newly targeted under the programme, thus addressing a critical need and reducing household chores. Additionally, ten (10) cattle carts were distributed to farmers' groups benefiting 250 women by easing domestic tasks and facilitating access to health services and markets. While the procurement of multifunctional platforms is still underway, these initial interventions have markedly enhanced the quality of life and resource access for rural women. The planned multifunctional platforms designed to support a variety of agricultural and community needs such as water pumping and Processing Agricultural Products will be installed in the second half of 2024, further advancing these improvements.

The program has achieved significant progress in improving agricultural and livestock management. In 2024, 20 tonnes of livestock feed, including pellets and wheat bran, were distributed to beneficiaries of the pastoral kits, ensuring better livestock nourishment. Additionally, 42 Farmer Field Schools (*CEAP - Champs écoles agro-pastoraux*) were established, training 278 additional producers (for a total of 1,260, since December 2023) including 220 additional women (729 women in total since December 2023), in advanced agricultural techniques. These schools, now in their second support cycle since 2023, cover various seasons and regions, boosting the capacity of rural producers.¹ Furthermore, the 400 members of Basic Land Commissions formed in 2023, including 110 women, received training in land management and conflict resolution and are now issuing land tenure certificates to both women and men, supported by land security document kits. This initiative also laid the groundwork for upcoming training courses on the OHADA Act's² operational rules for Producers' Organizations (POs), focusing on governance, gender, and equity, aimed at empowering women's groups and enhancing organizational effectiveness.

Output 1.2 Skills and capacity strengthened to increase food production, food quality and local food security reserves; reduce food loss and waste; and improve household nutrition.

Training courses on nutrition are pending completion of the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey on nutrition, expected by August 2024, which will guide the development of the training materials. The service provider for these courses has been selected, setting the stage for improved household

¹ This training includes 10 CEAPs for the 2023/2024 irrigated season and 32 CEAPs for the 2024 rainfed season, with 20 agropastoral school fields in Dosso and 12 in Maradi.

² Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa.

nutrition. Meanwhile, support for food processing and storage is advancing with a diagnosis started by RECA (National Network of Chambers of Agriculture in Niger) initiated in June, to identify sites for building storage warehouses in 12 high-potential villages. These warehouses will benefit women involved in agri-food production and members of farmers' organizations.

Outcome 2: Increased income, decent work and economic autonomy for rural women to secure their livelihoods and strengthen their resilience.

Under this outcome, a total of 20 activities are planned. Of these, 6 were carried over from 2023 to 2024 because they were not finalized, with 3 successfully completed during the reporting period. Additionally, 1 new activity was completed in the first semester of 2024, 1 is currently ongoing and 13 have yet to be started.

Output 2.1: Women's capacities and skills strengthened, workload reduced and access to virtual platforms for entrepreneurship, markets and value chains more equitable.

Training in financial literacy was provided to the 200 members of the established Village Savings and Loan Associations (*Associations villageoises d'épargne et de crédit - AVEC*), in 2023, with additional 94 additional members for a total of 106 management bodies now formally established and now equipped with formal internal . Furthermore, 44 local community agents, all women, were trained to support AVECs across 40 intervention villages. This training has ensured effective management and sustainability of the AVECs. The identification phase and the setting up of these organisations took place in 2023. The year 2024 was devoted to building the capacity of these organisations and their trainers.

Progress has been made in strengthening women's capacities and improving their access to entrepreneurship, markets, and value chains. In 2024, additional 848 women from Producers' Organizations (POs) received essential training in associative life, crucial for their groups' sustainability. Additionally, awareness-raising sessions were held for 500 participants from Producer Unions and Groups, focusing on local purchasing opportunities. These sessions, which are new implemented this year, facilitated the integration of smallholder farmers into agricultural markets and institutional purchasing networks, including potential market linkages with school canteens supported by WFP and other local market opportunities. This process also played a key role in selecting villages for storage warehouses and exploring public and local market opportunities in the Dosso and Maradi regions.

Progress has been also made in advancing women's involvement in Village Forestry Businesses and assessing local entrepreneurial capacities. In 2024, two (2) sites were developed in Fabidji and Kankandi (Dosso), covering 0.5 hectares, for 100 women. These sites, equipped with fencing, market garden wells, and drainage systems, support the cultivation of non-timber forest products and wood-based businesses. Although initially delayed in 2023, this activity is set to continue with the creation of storage warehouses and large-scale marketing in 2025. In the first half of the year, two key assessments uncovered women's diverse entrepreneurial skills. The first identified 87 businesses with expertise in handicrafts, cosmetics, sewing, livestock, agri-food processing, and basket-making. The second highlighted strong engagement in sheep, goat, and poultry farming, with local processing of millet and groundnuts into products like oil and flour.

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

Of the 4 activities not carried out, 3 are scheduled for the second half of the year according to the 2024 plan, while the other activity is conditional on the study of women entrepreneurs, which has not yet been finalised.

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

Of the activities not carried out, 2 are scheduled for the second half of the year according to the 2024 plan. The equipment was delivered in June (start of the rainy season). The equipment will be distributed during the optimal period, i.e. from October onwards.

Outcome 3: Rural women's voice and capacity for action are strengthened with a view to better leadership and their full participation on an equal footing within their households, communities, organisations and in systems of governance.

Under outcome 3, a total of 7 new activities are planned. Of these, none were carried over from 2023 to 2024. While new 1 activity were also completed, 2 are currently ongoing and 4 not started yet.

Output 3.1: Increased leadership capacity and skills to participate in local governance and decision-making structures.

During the reporting period, the 337 Dimitra Clubs, which include 8,485 members (6,019 of whom are women), In general, the clubs are expected to play a pivotal role in enhancing leadership and community involvement. Their number, the number of members and leaders are monitored continuously (by gender and age); additionally they act as a lever for all the activities planned over the duration of the JP RWEE. Through ongoing support and coaching of the implementing partner in charge of community engagement, these clubs have facilitated significant changes such as improving local decision-making processes, advocating for gender equality, and promoting community-driven development initiatives. For example, as confirmed by feedback from community surveys and reports from the Dimitra Clubs' meetings, the clubs participate in decision making regarding local governance issues (in a context where they do not take part in any public meeting), including local water management issues. They have been active in creating inclusive forums for discussing women's roles in community leadership. Their participation has also been crucial in selecting participants for JP RWEE II training courses and ensuring transparency in program processes. These achievements highlight their increased capacity for leadership and their growing influence in shaping equitable community governance.

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

The planned activities under Output 3.2 have faced delays. Specifically, four activities intended to enhance organizational capacities and social capital for gender-responsive producer organizations, cooperatives, and self-help groups have not yet started. Delays in signing the contract with UN Women have postponed activities such as training rural women and men to form legally recognized farmer organizations and establishing women mediator groups for local conflict resolution, including natural resource management issues. Additionally, delays in FAO's partner recruitment have stalled the implementation of corporate governance training for producers and cooperatives aimed at improving transparency, efficiency, and

gender equity. Similarly, the training to enhance the capabilities of leaders and members of producer organizations on operational procedures has also been affected.

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

Under outcome 4, a total of 6 activities are planned. Of these, 3 were carried over from 2023 to 2024 because not finalized, with 1 of these successfully completed under the reporting period. While 0 new activity was completed, 1 is currently ongoing and 2 not started yet.

Output 4.1 Enhanced capacity of policy makers and other relevant stakeholders to design, implement and monitor gender-responsive policies, strategies, legal frameworks and budgets

In the reporting period, some strides were made to enhance the capacity of local officials and municipal service officials in gender-sensitive planning and budgeting. A workshop was conducted for new 100 participants (including 25% women), from the Dosso and Maradi regions. This training targeted departmental and municipal technical staff from the Ministry of Public Health, Population and Social Action/women's promotion department, as well as local elected representatives. It focused on equipping these individuals with methodological tools and approaches to ensure that the specific needs of vulnerable segments of the community are effectively incorporated into community planning and budgeting processes. These trained officials are now poised to serve as trainers themselves, sharing their new skills with other managers in their communities. This cascade training model aims to improve planning and budgeting practices across the regions, thereby fostering a more inclusive approach to policy and service delivery. This is the first training session since the programme was implemented, and it will be repeated in future years for the same number of participants. However, the activity could not be held in 2023 due to the socio-political change that took place in July of the same year.

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

The project has faced several significant challenges. **The worsening security situation** in Kankandi and Fabidji, coupled with impact of the military coup of July 2023, has hindered both project activities and accessibility to targeted municipalities. Additionally, leadership gaps have emerged, particularly with the departure of the JP RWEE National Coordinator, which has led to reduced responsiveness and motivation among agencies. Nonetheless, the Technical Committee has remained proactive, managing to hold four out of the six planned meetings to address these issues and foster collaboration.

Compounding these difficulties are **delays resulting from a chain reaction of interdependent activities**. For instance, the postponement of the Nutrition Knowledge, Skills, and Practices (KSP) survey has delayed the start of nutrition training. Similarly, procurement delays for multifunctional platforms and improved stoves have impacted the scheduling of related training sessions. **Challenges in identifying suitable service providers**, particularly for training on biological control of the millet leafminer³ and the CAP study, have also contributed to setbacks. Furthermore, the transition to a new working platform at UN Women has added another layer of complexity to the procurement process and service provider identification.

³ The millet leafminer (*Liriomyza sorghicola*) is an insect pest that affects millet crops. It is known for its destructive feeding habits, where the larvae mine the leaves of the millet plants, creating tunnels or "mines" as they feed. This damage reduces the plant's photosynthetic ability, leading to decreased crop yields and overall plant health. The leafminer can significantly impact millet production, making it a concern for farmers and agricultural practices, particularly in regions where millet is a staple crop. Effective management strategies often involve integrated pest management (IPM) techniques, including biological control, resistant varieties, and proper agronomic practices.

The experience has underscored the importance of proactive management. the Technical Committee’s **regular engagement and proactive measures** have been key in addressing delays and sustaining project momentum. Flexibility and adaptability in project planning have proven crucial, particularly when navigating external disruptions and internal transitions. Despite facing challenges, the Technical Committee has demonstrated resilience and commitment by successfully convening four of the six planned coordination meetings. This steadfast engagement has been pivotal in managing the project effectively. Meanwhile, the project has continued to make paced progress in areas unaffected by delays, showcasing its ability to adapt and advance despite setbacks.

Key **successes** include the establishment of local businesses and the ability of women to contribute to household finances while planning for future growth, such as securing land for millet cultivation, as evidenced by the inspiring story of a member of the Dimitra Clubs, Zeynabou Souley. Her experience underscores the importance of practical training, community organization, and leveraging local resources to drive sustainable development and self-sufficiency. Zeynabou and her fellow women in the village of Guilguijé embraced the skills acquired from a training in Gazaoua and established ten companies, producing Toukoudi, a traditional dried millet paste. Their initial venture, funded through collective savings and contributions, led to a profit of 4,000 CFA francs (approximately USD 6.50) within two weeks. This success has empowered them, demonstrating the transformative potential of self-reliance and entrepreneurship.

“Emboldened by our success, we realised that we could get by on our own efforts. At present, we contribute to our respective household expenses and much more besides. We're also planning to build up a stock of our raw materials to avoid shortages”.

“Our dream would be to have access to land to produce our raw material, millet, in abundance. Today, we have added cowpea couscous to our menu. We make both products and it's going well”.

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.