



# Review of the Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment in Rwanda (2014 – 2019)

September 2019



## Review Management

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## Table of Contents

Review Management.....	2
Review Reference Group .....	2
Acronyms .....	5
Executive Summary .....	6
<b>I. Introduction .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Joint Programme Background.....	13
Objectives of the Review .....	14
<i>Purpose and Objectives</i> .....	14
<i>Scope</i> .....	15
<b>II. Methodology.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Review Questions.....	17
Data Collection Methods, Sources and Sampling Approach .....	18
Data Collection Tools .....	20
<i>Survey</i> .....	20
<i>Focus Group Discussions</i> .....	21
<i>Key Informant Interviews</i> .....	21
Data Quality Control Measures.....	21
<i>Quality Assurance Process</i> .....	21
<i>Data Collection Risks, Limitations, and Ethical Considerations</i> .....	22
Data Coding and Analysis.....	23
<b>III. Findings.....</b>	<b>26</b>
Review Criteria 1: Relevance.....	26
Review Criteria 2: Effectiveness.....	37
Review Criteria 3: Efficiency.....	59
Review Criteria 4: Sustainability.....	70
Review Criteria 5: Impact .....	75
<b>IV. Conclusions .....</b>	<b>82</b>
Overall.....	82
Programming .....	82
Systems and Structures / Coordination, Leadership and Strategy.....	84
<b>V. Recommendations.....</b>	<b>86</b>

## Acronyms

ASWG	Agriculture Working Group
A-WEAI	Abbreviated Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
EICV4	Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FtMA	Farm to Market Alliance
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment
GoR	Government of Rwanda
GMO	Gender Monitoring Office
HDDS	Household Dietary Diversity Scale
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGA	Income Generating Activity
IP	Implementing Partner
JADF	Joint Action Development Forum
JP-RWEE	Joint Programme on Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment
KII	Key Informant Interview
MIGEPROF	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
MINAGRI	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources
MINIJUST	Ministry of Justice
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NISR	National Institute of Statistics Rwanda
NPPA	National Public Prosecution Authority of Rwanda
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RCA	Rwanda Cooperative Agency
PHHS	Post-harvest Handling and Storage
PMF	Performance Management Framework
RGB	Rwanda Governance Board
RRG	Review Reference Group
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation
ToR	Terms of Reference
UCW	Unpaid Care Work
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
WDDS	Women’s Dietary Diversity Score
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization



# Executive Summary

## Background

Women are critical to the development of national economies, accounting for the majority of the agricultural labor force and main contributors to care work in the household. However, rural women have restricted access to productive resources such as land, agricultural inputs, finance and credit, extension services, and technology, which in turn limits agricultural output and, subsequently, undermines household food and nutrition security. While a variety of government and non-government programmes are helping to increase women's political participation, access to rights, access to credit and markets, and involvement in on- and off-farm activities, patriarchal gender norms continue to constrain women's time and opportunity to fully engage in new market and community activities. Furthermore, women are less likely to engage in community leadership and decision-making roles, limiting the relevance of local policies and programmes according to their everyday needs and priorities.

The Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP-RWEE) was conceived to address the challenges faced by rural women farmers. Implemented jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Food Programme (WFP), and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the overarching goal of this joint global programme is to secure rural women's livelihoods and rights in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda. Each agency brings a distinct comparative advantage to JP-RWEE based on its technical expertise and representation across countries.

JP-RWEE has four outcomes it intends to achieve:

**Outcome 1.** Rural women have improved food and nutrition security.

**Outcome 2.** Rural women have increased income to secure their livelihoods and create wealth.

**Outcome 3.** Rural women have enhanced leadership and participation in their communities and in rural institutions, and in shaping laws, policies and programmes.

**Outcome 4.** A more gender-responsive policy environment is secured for the economic empowerment of rural women.

JP-RWEE seeks to address gender inequities by tackling them across dimensions, using a dual accountability framework, improving women's access to and control over resources, women's agency to pursue her rights, and the institutional structures which prevent women from fully realizing their rights.

## Objectives and Scope

The purpose of the review was to produce a utilization-focused assessment of JP-RWEE's current contributions to women's economic empowerment in Rwanda. In addressing the above, specific objectives of the review include:

**Objective 1** To review JP-RWEE against OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact; the criteria of scalability will be assessed to a limited extent.

**Objective 2:** To assess how, and in what ways, JP-RWEE is contributing to the SDGs and changes in rural women's economic empowerment across different dimensions and as defined by indicators in the Performance Management Framework (PMF), and if there have been any unexpected effects.

**Objective 3:** Based on the insights gained through addressing the other objectives, make recommendations for JP-RWEE improvements and document lessons and good practices.

The intended users of the review are: WFP, IFAD, FAO and UN Women management and technical staff (in-country and globally), government and non-governmental actors partnering in implementation, donors such as the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Sida, as well as beneficiaries themselves. The review was participatory and sought regular feedback and engagement from the Review Reference Group to ensure the review design and findings inform the improvement of future work of UN Agencies operating in the frameworks of Women's Economic Empowerment, joint programming, and UN 'Delivering as One' reforms.

There have been two distinct phases of implementation: from 2014-16, in which 18,275 beneficiaries were served across seven districts, and 2017-19, when a more streamlined approach was taken and served 2,083 beneficiaries across three districts. The review was carried out in all three current districts of operations (Nyaruguru, Ngoma & Kirehe) as well as two previous districts of operations (Musanze & Kamonyi) and assessed the progress of JP-RWEE implementation from September 2014 to July 2019.

## Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through a desk review of JP-RWEE documentation, key informant interviews (36 interviews), focus group discussions with supported cooperative groups (with 123 individuals), and household surveys with a random sample of 133 beneficiaries and 98 of their spouses.

A randomized sampling approach was used in selecting ten cooperative groups to be visited where JP-RWEE currently exists, as well as in selecting 13 group members per group to be surveyed along with their spouses. The sampled number of members aimed for statistical significance at a 10 percent margin of error with a 95 percent level of confidence, and therefore, the number of members engaged was larger than the minimum sample so as to maintain the level of confidence despite potential challenges with accessing people in the field. The household survey questions aligned with indicators within the JP-RWEE PMF and utilized standardized tools where available, including the Abbreviated Women's in Empowerment in Agriculture Index (A-WEAI), the Women's Dietary Diversity Scale, and the Food Insecurity Experience Scale.

Purposive sampling was applied for the selection of focus group and interview respondents so as to capture qualitative feedback on JP-RWEE progress across districts and periods of implementation.

The most significant limitations faced within the review were:

- **Length of the review timeline**, limiting the number of stakeholders to be engaged: this limitation was mitigated by slightly extending the timeline for data collection in order to achieve a slightly larger sample which is still representative to a limited extent and suitable for the purpose of a review.
- **Lack of quantitative outcome-related data** proved to be a considerable limitation, with mostly secondary data available at baseline, therefore restricting the review's ability to assess programme attribution to outcomes: this limitation was mitigated by triangulating data across methods and sources.

## Findings

The review covered 13 findings clustered around the five criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact, and corresponding to eight review questions:

- **Relevance** of activities and planned outcomes to the needs of rural women and alignment with the country context and policies, as well as with Implementing Agencies' country office strategies and international normative frameworks
- **Effectiveness** of JP-RWEE's activities and contributions to rural women's improved livelihoods and rights security
- **Efficiency** of JP-RWEE management and coordination mechanisms, resources, and strategic partnerships in achieving results
- **Sustainability** of activities and achieved results
- **Impact** of JP-RWEE on the target groups across dimensions of empowerment

Scalability was assessed to a limited extent, primarily referenced by stakeholders in the context of 'Sustainability'.

## Conclusions

**Conclusion 1:** The overall response and coordination of JP-RWEE in Rwanda was slow to start and Implementing Agencies did not immediately establish mechanisms or pathways for planning, coordination and communication, resulting in a lapse in cohesion experienced amongst beneficiaries, Implementing Partners and other key stakeholders. Commitment from the Agencies' Country Representatives and leadership within JP-RWEE renewed efforts to capitalize on the Joint Programme modality and take advantage of Implementing Agencies' and Partners' expertise. With this second phase of a more cohesive response initiated in 2017, JP-RWEE in Rwanda prioritized the most vulnerable populations, providing them with a comprehensive package of services founded on the value addition of Implementing Agencies and Partners and relevant to beneficiaries' immediate needs.

**Conclusion 2:** Implementing Agencies have assumed essential roles in the development landscape in Rwanda, demonstrating a strong understanding of, and alignment with, the needs of rural women as well as national and international priorities related to gender equality and women's empowerment, food and nutrition security, and inclusive economic growth, such as SDGs 1, 2, 5 and 17, the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme Framework, and Rwanda's National Strategy for Transformation. Qualitative evidence indicates that activities supported through JP-RWEE are positively received by beneficiaries and national stakeholders, and notable progress has been made in increasing women's production and access to finance, thereby increasing women's experienced incomes and financial independence. However, reduced and discontinuous funding has limited JP-RWEE's effectiveness and efficiency in Rwanda. With limited funding shared across four Agencies and a short timeline for implementation, women's leadership and an improved and gender-sensitive policy environment have not been prioritized areas for activities. Fewer results have been realized related to leadership and policy change, as well as other longer-term outcomes, such as increased and sustainable market access and agro-processing leading to market-responsive business creation and income-generation that extends beyond simply supporting household vital needs, like food, health insurance and school fees. However, an accurate quantitative determination of the effectiveness of activities in terms of progress against specific indicators is limited by the lack of systematic quantitative outcome-related data on JP-RWEE.

**Conclusion 3:** JP-RWEE has systematically documented and analyzed its context and alignment with rural women's needs at the international, national, and community levels and utilized human rights-based approaches, focusing on inclusion through the recruitment and integration of the most marginalized women in Rwandan society (e.g. single mothers, HIV+ women, former sex workers) into formally registered cooperative groups. While recruiting marginalized groups into cooperatives sometimes resulted in unintended effects at the



onset of activities, such as increased experience of social stigma or household disputes as a result of being included in public spaces, recruitment strategies mostly resulted in improved social inclusion through formal registration of cooperatives and integration of the most vulnerable into pre-existing community support systems managed by government institutions and non-governmental organizations. If JP-RWEE had utilized a real baseline on beneficiary status, as opposed to secondary data on national averages, it is likely that JP-RWEE would have observed more significant quantitative improvements on impact-level indicators, such as decreased undernourishment and food insecurity, increased ownership of land, and observable decreases in women's 'disempowerment' across domains of the A-WEAI.

However, at the same time, considering targeted women's vulnerable state at baseline, substantial resources are required to elevate women's status by addressing the entirety of the Theory of Change and envisaged impact-level results. As such, women's vulnerability affects the sustainability of results, as women face more individual barriers to training attendance, knowledge transfer and subsequent integration into other flagship programmes of Implementing Agencies targeting larger groups of beneficiaries.

**Conclusion 4:** JP-RWEE has contributed to rural women's improved livelihoods through improved agricultural practices and the re-investment of savings into agricultural inputs, resulting in a reported 2-8x increase in vegetable and livestock production, improved diet and nutrition, and attributable income gains, particularly through cooperative / women's group level savings. While there is evidence that beneficiaries are increasing their agricultural production as a result of their participation in activities, there is less evidence to suggest that they are individually diversifying their agricultural products and breaking into agri-business and self-employment. Notably, there is little change in the balance of crops produced by participating farmers, with maize and beans still representing the majority crop cultivated amongst the sampled respondents; diversification of production has

largely occurred at a small-scale through kitchen gardens, varying the types of nutritious foods consumed within households. However, even individual dietary diversity amongst beneficiaries remains low.

Tomatoes provide a useful example of diversification, as there were increases in production but capacity limitations on the benefits yielded by the intervention. The increased production was driven by the provision of greenhouses; in this case, the greenhouse capacity did not sufficiently meet the local demand that the supply was paired to. As a result, buyers felt that the supply was not consistent or reliable, and therefore looked elsewhere for the produce. Related to this note, there are only limited cases of new business activities amongst sampled beneficiaries as a result of participation in activities. For example, there remains limited involvement in agricultural processing activities amongst beneficiaries, despite trainings and the provision of processing equipment, though certification of processed goods does present a barrier to entry.

**Conclusion 5:** Women participating in JP-RWEE had observably low literacy levels and reported difficulties engaging with some of the content. This affects the capacity of women to benefit from programme participation, as the 'train-the-trainer' modality and written materials limits the extent to which knowledge is transferred from trained leaders to other beneficiaries. Furthermore, the lower levels of literacy amongst participating women curtails their progress into leadership roles and influences male perceptions regarding their capacity to lead.

Despite these limitations to knowledge acquisition and leadership attainment, opportunities to practice community leadership through cooperative groups and national agri-shows, and household leadership through the application of Gender Action Learning System (GALS) tools promoting shared planning and decision-making, have resulted in women's increased confidence and self-esteem. Women's confidence has served as a means to overcome reported literacy barriers, with some women advancing into leadership roles in cooperatives, village governments, and the National Women's Council. Women's increased confidence has also

supported improved financial outcomes and independence, as women feel more confident in interacting with formal and informal financial institutions, contributing savings and taking loans to fulfill household needs for health and education.

**Conclusion 6:** The A-WEAI score shows that 90.9% of women have achieved adequacy across domains of production, resources, income, leadership and time. Of the 9.1% of women not achieving 'adequacy' across domains, and therefore classified as disempowered, the primary contributing factor to their disempowerment was a heavy workload on both productive and domestic tasks. This again ties back to the vulnerability of women served and the various competing priorities over their time: whether they are single parents with sole caretaking and income-generation responsibilities for their households or women who are HIV+ with significant health needs, women engaged as part of this review felt it difficult to attend trainings and group meetings, as well as to find time to make productive decisions regarding harvests and participate in community leadership. As such, some women's achieved empowerment was compromised.

**Conclusion 7:** Reduced budgets and discontinuity in funding timelines sometimes compromised a more coherent and planned response amongst Implementing Agencies and Partners. In the national programme design phase, the PMF developed at the global level helped to define results areas and associated activities contextualized to Rwanda. However, limited resources provided at the onset of programme activities in 2014 and 2015 required Agencies to de-prioritize some activities, including the recruitment of a national coordinator and knowledge management specialist, and created gaps in the intervention logic at the national level. In the first phase, from 2014-16, monitoring efforts were constrained by resources, including time, money, and human capacity, thereby limiting capacity to effectively collect, use and report on reliable data tied to programme activities. While improvements have been realized on the joint implementation and monitoring of activities, gaps in data still exist as a result of previously experienced constraints at baseline.

Furthermore, the annual funding cycle interrupts the continuous operations of the programme by Implementing Partners, creating uncertainty that undermines the planning process. Due to the short funding cycle, Agencies resort to re-contracting IPs each funding cycle. This skews the service provision offered by partners such that their implementation occurs over a shorter period than they would otherwise prefer to deliver on longer-term outcomes, such as increased income and sustainable market access, and creating gaps in services provided to beneficiaries. The short funding cycle also limits the time Implementing Partners are able to plan and align on activities and timelines amongst themselves, which sometimes resulted in the duplication of activities or experience of 'activity fatigue' from beneficiaries. Implementing Agencies' and Partners' increased communication and engagement with the each other and the beneficiaries has helped to address such challenges as they arise.

**Conclusion 8:** JP-RWEE is the first joint programme initiated amongst UN Women and the Rome-based Agencies, and each Agency brings a unique, though intersecting, approach to women's improved livelihoods and rights achievement. While cohesion in activities was slow to take hold, over time, Implementing Agencies have worked to maximize strategic partnerships and leverage their comparative strengths, contributing to enhanced learning, capacity, and synergies amongst Implementing Agencies and Partners. The global coordination structure helped to facilitate increased cohesion and accountability to results.

Furthermore, the inter-agency alliance formed through JP-RWEE pushed forward the 'Delivering as One UN' agenda and capitalized on the collective influencing power of the UN. This was seen as an advantage for IPs, helping to mobilize additional resources to serve JP-RWEE beneficiaries or integrate JP-RWEE components into other projects. However, Agencies have not mobilized resources nationally to the same extent as IPs. The positioning of JP-RWEE in the UNDP II is expected to help mobilize resources more effectively and decrease dependence on Sida and Norway as the sole donors.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** In order to maintain the cohesion in planning and implementation that has been established within this second phase (2017-19), and reduce the risks to quality potentially associated with increasing the population served, continue working with the scaled down number of cooperative groups. In order to increase scale, consider the Graduation Approach developed by BRAC in Bangladesh, focused on similar outcomes of increased food security and sustainable livelihoods. While the intervention areas align, targeting the poorest households, providing consumption and production support, building savings, and providing skills training on entrepreneurship and market access, the Graduation Approach also delineates criteria for graduation from programme support, such as a minimum savings balance or number of markets accessed, allowing resources to be reallocated to other beneficiaries and cooperative groups once metrics have been achieved.

**Recommendation 2:** JP-RWEE in Rwanda should improve the consistency and accuracy of monitoring data, especially with respect to addressing the current limitations and gaps in baseline data. This should include setting aside resources in order to establish a clear and measurable baseline within future iterations of the programme. This is particularly necessary for indicators on production and income, where clear units of measurement and measurement strategies are required to assess the percent change over time. The systematized collection of data on indicators will also help to strengthen efforts already undertaken to continuously align the relevance of programme activities with the stated needs of beneficiaries.

**Recommendation 3:** Continued assessments, through improved monitoring strategies, will help to better understand constraints to participation. Based on the review, there is a need to target beneficiary literacy, likely through advocacy and partnerships and/or improved training methods, in order to augment the benefits of participation for all female group members, including knowledge

acquisition and the advancement into leadership roles, which have required an understanding of written content.

**Recommendation 4:** Focus should remain on cooperative group production and kitchen gardens for household use, considering the limited land available to cultivate in Rwanda. With available land presenting constraints to market access and diversification of crops, consider focusing large-scale cooperative production across districts and developing hubs for quality crop production and processing. For processing crops such as tomatoes, which require certification from Rwanda Standards Board, focus on connecting the cooperative hub to small agro-processors already processing tomatoes, increasing their supply of quality products and farmers' access to sustainable markets.

**Recommendation 5:** JP-RWEE has already done well to include men in this women-centered programme, though behavior change takes time and constraints still exist. Women's responsibility for unpaid care work needs to be more directly addressed in programme activities. Since the A-WEAI is based on self-reported data on access to and control over resources, and in many cases men also registered 'inadequacy' across domains, it is possible that men are feeling disenfranchised, which is hindering overall progress. The recommendation is not to shift focus to men; it is possible to increase the number of men reached while still maintaining focus on women. Taking a 'systems' approach to gender equality would bolster women's economic empowerment.

**Recommendation 6:** JP-RWEE should lengthen the funding cycle (or implementation cycle) to permit improved planning processes and coordinated programming, which allows medium-to-long-term effects to be realized and observed amongst participating groups. A multi-year funding cycle would create time for increased planning and coordination amongst Implementing Partners as well as with GoR stakeholders, which should be facilitated by Implementing Agencies, reducing the experienced duplication of activities and maximizing impact.





WFP 2019, Greenhouse Supported through JP-RWEE Funds and Partnerships



# I. Introduction

This report is organized in four sections:

Section 1 is an introduction and provides a brief overview of the Joint Programme on Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment.

Section 2 provides a description of the methodology used.

Section 3 presents the findings from the review. Findings are organized under six review criteria and associated questions. For each question, there is a list of the relevant findings, followed by the evidence from field visits, document review, and key informant interviews.

Section 4 presents conclusions made on the basis of this collected and analyzed evidence.

Section 5 presents recommendations made on the basis of the collected and analyzed evidence and the subsequent conclusions.

## Joint Programme Background

Women are critical to the development of national economies, accounting for the majority of the agricultural labor force and main contributors to unpaid care work in the household; 77% of females in Rwanda are employed in agriculture,<sup>1</sup> and, globally, it is estimated that the unpaid work undertaken by women amounts to USD \$10 trillion of output per year, equivalent to 13% of the global GDP, which is not accounted for in traditional measures.<sup>2</sup> However, rural women and girls have restricted access to productive resources such as land, agricultural inputs, finance and credit, extension services, and technology, which in turn limits agricultural output and, subsequently, undermines household food and nutrition security. While a variety of government and non-government programmes are helping to increase women’s political participation, access to their rights, access to credit and markets, and involvement in on- and off-farm productive activities, traditional and patriarchal gender norms continue to constrain women’s available time and opportunity to fully engage in new market and community activities. Men often see themselves responsible for income-generating work, while women remain the primary caregivers in families, responsible for unpaid care work such as childcare, cooking, fetching water and weeding.<sup>3</sup> According to a survey conducted by ActionAid Rwanda in partnership with the Institute of Development Studies in the UK, women in Rwanda spend an average of seven hours on unpaid care work per day, while men spend approximately one hour.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization. *ILOSTAT database* (April 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Woetzel, J. et. al. “The Power of Parity: How Advancing Women’s Equality Can Add \$12 Trillion to Global Growth.” *McKinsey Global Institute* (2015).

<sup>3</sup> BRAC. “Women Balancing Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work in Rwanda: National Report for Women’s Economic Empowerment Policy and Programming.” *BRAC Research and Evaluation Unit* (October 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Mbabazi, D. “Why Unpaid Care Work is a Thorny Issue in Women’s Empowerment.” *The New Times* (September 2017).

Due to the time spent on unpaid care work, women are less likely to benefit from on- and off-farm employment and formal market opportunities in the agriculture sector; only 45% of women participated in the formal labor force, compared to 63% of men.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, women are less likely to engage in community leadership and decision-making roles, limiting the relevance of local policies and programmes according to their everyday needs and priorities.

The Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP-RWEE) Programme was conceived to address these challenges faced by rural farmers. Implemented jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Food Programme (WFP), and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the overarching goal of this joint global programme is to secure rural women's livelihoods and rights in the context of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda. Each agency brings a distinct comparative advantage to JP-RWEE based on its technical expertise and representation across countries. JP-RWEE started as a five-year initiative (2012-2017) with an estimated USD \$35 million budget to be mobilized by partnering UN Agencies and provided for by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It has currently been extended to June 2020, and the total contribution mobilized by July 2019 is USD \$25,928,146.<sup>6</sup>

JP-RWEE has four outcomes it intends to achieve:

**Outcome 1.** Rural women have improved food and nutrition security.

**Outcome 2.** Rural women have increased income to secure their livelihoods and create wealth.

**Outcome 3.** Rural women have enhanced leadership and participation in their communities and in rural institutions, and in shaping laws, policies and programmes.

**Outcome 4.** A more gender-responsive policy environment is secured for the economic empowerment of rural women.

JP-RWEE seeks to address gender inequities by tackling them across dimensions, using a dual accountability framework, improving women's access to and control over resources, women's agency to pursue her rights, and the institutional structures which are preventing women from fully realizing their rights.

## Objectives of the Review

### *Purpose and Objectives*

The purpose of the review was to produce a utilization-focused assessment of JP-RWEE's current contributions to women's economic empowerment in Rwanda. Considering the dual objectives of

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<sup>5</sup> National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR). "Labour Force Survey Trends, May 2019 Report." *NISR* (July 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office. "2018 Annual Narrative and Financial Progress Report." *UNDP/UN* (July 2018).

accountability and evidence-based learning, the review assessed the results and unintended effects of JP-RWEE's integrated approach and documented lessons to help reinforce and/or revise the theory of change and provide recommendations for subsequent phases of programme implementation and national and/or global scaling. The findings will also be used to promote dialogue on gender-responsive strategies and inclusive local and national economic development. The intended users of the review are: WFP, IFAD, FAO and UN Women management and technical staff (in-country and globally), government and non-state actors partnering in implementation (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI), Joint Action Development Forum (JADF), CARE International, Imbuto Foundation, INADES Formation Rwanda), the UNDG Resident Coordinator Office in Rwanda, the Government of Rwanda (GoR), donors such as the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Sida, as well as beneficiaries themselves.

In addressing the above, specific objectives of the review include:

**Objective 1** To review JP-RWEE against OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and any likely impact created thus far; the criteria of scalability will also be assessed to a limited extent.

**Objective 2:** To assess how, and in what ways, JP-RWEE is contributing to Sustainable Development Goals, UNDP I&II results, and changes in rural women's economic empowerment across different dimensions and as defined by indicators in the Performance Management Framework (PMF), specifically agency, resources, and institutional structures, and if there have been any negative or unexpected effects.

**Objective 3:** Based on the insights gained through addressing the other objectives, make recommendations for JP-RWEE improvements and document lessons, good practices, and innovations for scale.

The review was participatory and sought regular feedback and engagement from the Review Reference Group (RRG) to ensure the review design and findings inform the improvement of future work of UN Agencies operating in the frameworks of Women's Economic Empowerment, joint programming and UN 'Delivering as One' reforms.

### **Scope**

In Rwanda, JP-RWEE is led by WFP in partnership with FAO, IFAD, and UN Women. JP-RWEE currently has 2,083 direct beneficiaries (1,713 women and 370 men) and is being implemented in the three districts of Kirehe and Ngoma in Eastern Province and Nyaruguru in Southern Province. In Nyaruguru, JP-RWEE operates in Ngoma, Nyagisozi, Ngera and Cyahinda sectors, Murama, Jarama and Sake sectors in Ngoma, and Nyamugari, Kigarama and Kirehe sectors in Kirehe. Between 2014 and 2016, JP-RWEE was implemented in the seven districts of Rubavu, Musanze, Kamonyi, Nyagatare, Kirehe, Ngoma and Nyaruguru, increasing the total number of direct participants from the beginning of the programme to 18,275 (10,406 women and 7,869 men) and benefiting a total of 87,446 indirect participants (46,853

women and 40,594 men).<sup>7</sup>

Due to unpredictability of funding and associated changes to the approach taken by JP-RWEE in Rwanda (findings that will be reviewed in-depth within the analysis), there have been two distinct phases from 2014-16, in which a greater number of beneficiaries were served, and 2017-19, when a more streamlined approach was taken. The review was carried out in all three current (2017-19) districts of operations (Nyaruguru, Ngoma and Kirehe) as well as two previous (2014-16) districts of operations (Musanze and Kamonyi) and assessed the progress of JP-RWEE implementation from September 2014 to July 2019 as well as the Programme's contributions to the above-mentioned outcomes.

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<sup>7</sup> Indirect beneficiary calculations are based on the Rwanda National Institute of Statistics (NISR) statistic on the average household size of 4.5 people.



## II. Methodology

The review was conducted in accordance with international evaluation standards including the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) principles and guidelines. The review integrated principles of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW) into the methodology, tools, and data analysis and reporting techniques used to ensure the participation, protection, and privacy of participants. Stakeholder participation was sought through the RRG, whose feedback was incorporated into all phases including the development of data collection tools, findings, and recommendations to achieve the review purpose of accountability and learning.

The review took a mixed-methods approach, including ongoing document reviews, household surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs). Quantitative data from the survey and Performance Management Framework (PMF) and qualitative data collected through this review were triangulated and disaggregated by location/gender, where possible, to develop a thorough understanding of variations in experiences of activities, outputs, and outcomes across Rwanda.

### Review Questions

Review questions were derived from OECD-DAC criteria and further clarified through sub-questions/assumptions and associated indicators (see 'Review Matrix' in Appendix V). Several versions of the Terms of Reference (ToR) were consulted and streamlined to develop the list of questions and indicators to be assessed. The final overarching review questions are summarized in Table 1 (below).

*Table 1 Review Questions*

Criteria	Review Question
Relevance	EQ1. To What extent have the specific defined outputs and outcomes of JP-RWEE been based on the identified needs and interests of rural women and communities in Rwanda?
	EQ2. To what extent is JP-RWEE aligned with national policies and priorities and to the international and regional normative frameworks for gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of inclusive growth?
Effectiveness	EQ3. To what extent does JP-RWEE contribute to rural women's improved livelihoods and rights security in Rwanda?
Efficiency	EQ4. To what extent has the JP-RWEE organizational structure, including managerial support and coordination mechanisms, supported the delivery of activities and achievement of results?
	EQ5. To what extent has JP-RWEE made good use of its human, financial and technical resources to maximize the efficiency of programme delivery?
Sustainability	EQ6. What is the likelihood that the benefits from JP-RWEE will be maintained for a reasonably long period of time after the programme phase out?
Scalability	EQ7. To what extent has JP-RWEE been able to introduce and promote replication and/or up-scaling of successful practices for achieving economic empowerment of rural women?
Impact	EQ8. Is there potential measurable impact of the intervention on the target group across all dimensions of women's empowerment?

## Data Collection Methods, Sources and Sampling Approach

Based on the mapping exercise conducted within the planning phase of the review, the following surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews were conducted:

- Beneficiary and Household Surveys
- FGDs with women's/cooperative groups
- In-depth semi-structured interviews with beneficiaries
- Interviews with district-level and national government engaged in the programme
- Interviews with UN Participating Agencies
- Interviews with global coordination team
- Interviews with Implementing Partners (IPs)

An interview with the UN Resident Coordinator in Kigali was planned but not conducted due to the respondent's unavailability during the brief review timeline.

A randomized sampling approach was adopted and used in selecting ten women's/cooperative groups to be visited where JP-RWEE currently exists, as well as in selecting 13 group members per group to be engaged in surveys. The calculated minimum sample size for the current target population (2,083 members, 82% female) was 92 at a 95% confidence level and 10% of margin of error, though more members were sampled and engaged to ensure confidence levels were maintained. It is important to note that, since the sample size was limited by time, geographical, and information constraints, such as missing baseline information, the results will be representative to a limited extent. With a smaller, randomly selected sample, the results are still representative of current districts of operation (where lists of participants by group were made available) at the 95% level though with a larger margin of error. Risks to data reliability were mitigated through triangulation of data methods and sources.

The sampled members' spouses or primary/secondary decision-makers in the household were also surveyed, if not from a female-headed/female adult only household. Since some women participating in JP-RWEE-supported groups are leading female adult only households, and therefore may not have decision-making counterparts within their households, it was estimated that approximately 130 members would be reached through surveys and fewer spouses/household decision-makers.

The ten randomly selected groups included: Abadahigwa Ba Gatore, Abaticumugambi, Imbaraga, Intambwe Idasobanya, Kubinya in Kirehe; Terimbere Mugore wa Sake and Twitezimbere Bategarugori in Ngoma; and Abahangudushya, COTECO, and Twitezimbere Kiyonza in Nyaruguru. Members from each group were randomly selected using member rosters; the number of female members sampled and surveyed were proportional to the total group population currently served by JP-RWEE; 83% of sampled members were female. For more information on the survey sample, refer to Appendix I.

Purposive sampling was applied for the selection of focus group discussion locations and respondents so as to capture qualitative feedback on JP-RWEE progress across regions, districts and periods of implementation. The qualitative focus groups gathered data from ten groups total,<sup>8</sup> two that were also

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<sup>8</sup> Eleven focus groups were conducted, though the contact details shared were incorrect for one group in Kirehe, and the group

randomly selected for surveys and eight groups not randomly selected, in order to both validate survey responses and gain additional information from cooperatives with unique characteristics, for example, groups for single mothers or HIV+ women and men. Interview respondents were also purposely selected and limited to those stakeholders most engaged in the implementation and management of activities and budgets (see Appendix II for the list of stakeholders interviewed).

Below is a table listing the total number of surveys, focus groups and interviews conducted in each district and Kigali. Focus groups included 9-16 participants, with representation from both men and women; however two groups did not have male members and therefore no men were present in discussions. Key demographics of focus group and survey respondents are provided in Appendix I.

*Table 2 Sampling Framework*

Stakeholder Type	Kigali	Ngoma	Nyaruguru	Kirehe	Musanze	Kamonyi	Total
Beneficiary Surveys	-	24	44	65	-	-	<b>133</b>
Household Member Surveys	-	17	33	48	-	-	<b>98</b>
FGDs with Cooperatives	-	2 (29pax)	3 (38pax)	1 (12pax)	2 (24pax)	2 (20pax)	<b>123</b>
In-depth semi-structured interviews with cooperative members	-	1	1	0	1	1	<b>4</b>
KIIs with government stakeholders	1	1	2	1	1	0	<b>6</b>
KIIs with Participating Agencies	9	-	-	-	-	-	<b>9</b>
KIIs with Implementing Partners	15	-	-	-	-	-	<b>15</b>
KIIs with global coordination team	2	-	-	-	-	-	<b>2</b>
<b>Actual # Stakeholders</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>390</b>
<b>Planned # Stakeholders</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>359</b>

**Note:** The sampled number of members is aiming for statistical significance at a 10 percent margin of error with a 95 percent level of confidence. The number of stakeholders engaged is larger than the minimum sample so as to maintain the level of confidence despite potential challenges with accessing people in the field.

Five additional members were sampled on the first day of data collection with Abahangudushya Cooperative in Nyaruguru. The rationale for a slightly larger sample on the first day was that members might not be easily accessed on short notice. However this did not present a problem, and all members sampled were surveyed. In the review, only five members sampled were unreachable, two females in Abadahigwa Ba Gatore and one in Abaticumugambi in Kirehe District, as well as two in Terimbere

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reached was a cooperative served through other programmes, but not JP-RWEE. The data from this group (7 males, 3 females participated) was therefore excluded from the analysis.

Mugore wa Sake in Ngoma District. A greater number of male spouses were “not at home/temporarily unavailable” for the household member survey (17).

Furthermore, the number of member surveys is higher than anticipated despite the five women who were unavailable, as three sampled members (one female, two male) had spouses who were also cooperative members.

## Data Collection Tools

As mentioned previously, the review employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect primary data from the field. This included: (1) surveys to collect quantitative data aligned with the PMF; (2) Focus Group Discussions to generate broad views of issues of concern, experiences and impact, and to construct stories of change; (3) In-depth Interviews with beneficiaries who have exceptional stories; and (4) Key Informant Interviews to obtain data from Programme implementers, duty bearers and other related stakeholders of JP-RWEE.

### Survey

The Women’s in Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) is a survey-based index designed to measure the empowerment, agency, and inclusion of women in the agricultural sector.<sup>9</sup> The WEAI consists of two sub-indices: (1) the five domains of empowerment (5DE), which assess the degree to which women are empowered across five domains that are similar to those defined in the JP-RWEE PMF; (2) the Gender Parity Index reflecting women’s empowerment in contrast to men in their households. The five domains measured within the 5DE include: (1) decisions about agricultural production (2) access to and decision-making power about productive resources; (3) control of use of income; (3) leadership in the community; and (5) time allocation. Most of these domains can be mapped to outcomes one, two and three of the PMF.

Since the timeframe for the review was limited, the Abbreviated WEAI (A-WEAI) was used to shorten the amount of time required to conduct the survey and folded into a larger JP-RWEE Household Survey. In addition to the five domains captured within the A-WEAI, the survey collected information on other outcome indicators within the PMF, including changes in agricultural yields (1.1), household food consumption patterns (1.2), income generated and change in income (2.1), and food insecurity experience (G.1).<sup>10</sup>

In addition, the A-WEAI is typically used to assess levels of empowerment of women in the agriculture sector, and for women in relation to men in the household. With feedback and consensus gained within the Inception Meeting amongst RRG members, the sampled respondents for the review included both members of JP-RWEE groups and primary or secondary decision-makers/members of the same household, such as spouses/partners, according to A-WEAI implementation requirements. Therefore, the A-WEAI analysis contributes to a benchmark understanding of empowerment amongst beneficiaries

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<sup>9</sup> Malapit, Hazel, et al. "Instructional Guide on the Abbreviated Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (A-WEAI)." *Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (2015).*

<sup>10</sup> The Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) is a measure for Global SDG Goal 2, Food and Nutrition Security.



across domains, which can be cross-referenced when the national survey is piloted.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Focus Group Discussions***

When assessing subjective outcomes such as empowerment and changes in gender norms and behaviors, narratives generated through participatory approaches provide a more nuanced picture of the changes experienced by beneficiaries (or other stakeholders) and what contributed to them. In addition, change stories generated through participatory approaches can also detail negative change and contribute to an assessment of unintended consequences of programme interventions. Such stories were prompted through the change mapping approach within FGDs.

Therefore, question prompts were used within focus group discussions to guide participants' development of 'change maps' or 'outcome maps'. The mapping exercise guided participants through the results chain backwards, starting with experienced outcomes through to the short-term outcomes and activities that contributed to the change. Through this process, the data gathered contributed to an increased understanding on progress towards outcome and output indicator achievement.

### ***Key Informant Interviews***

Similar to FGDs, in-depth interviews with participants were semi-structured and developed narratives of changes experienced/seen as a result of JP-RWEE interventions. KIIs with other stakeholders coordinating, implementing, managing and/or engaging in JP-RWEE activities were also semi-structured with question prompts categorized according to the review questions.

All survey, FGD and KII protocols conducted at the community-level were translated into Kinyarwanda by the consultant and enumerator team. In addition, previously translated versions of standardized tools were reviewed and used to ensure quality.

## **Data Quality Control Measures**

### ***Quality Assurance Process***

To ensure quality of community-level data collection processes, enumerators were trained, observed and given feedback by the consultant prior to data collection. Enumerators were tasked with ensuring daily quality control of data, however, the consultant provided oversight responsibility. In addition, data quality was monitored remotely by the consultant: consents and key notes gathered through surveys and focus groups were entered into tablets offline, synced to the database, and reviewed to identify any issues that needed to be taken up with the field team. This allowed the consultant to assess the quality of data being collected and make adjustments while data collection was taking place.

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<sup>11</sup> It was understood during the Inception Phase that the abbreviated version of the index may not be used in the national pilot, and that it was possible that JP-RWEE beneficiaries may not be incorporated into the sampling design. Therefore findings from the review should not be used to facilitate broad national and cross-country comparisons, though can be used for subsequent studies to understand programme progress towards rural women's economic empowerment and cross-referenced after the national pilot.

### Data Collection Risks, Limitations, and Ethical Considerations

The consultant followed the ethical standards set out in the UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluators. This included ensuring voluntary participation and the consent for and confidentiality of all information obtained during the data collection process. The consultant also ensured the triangulation of data so that conclusions were not influenced by any one party or methodology.

In addition, enumerators received a one-day training in data collection methodologies, which included ethics and safety when conducting research on individuals with diverse backgrounds. Throughout the review process, it was emphasized that activities must not put participants at risk and must ensure protection of the most vulnerable. Any challenges to participation were raised by the data collection team and addressed in the field. In addition, while no cases of violence emerged, enumerators were prepared to provide a reference list to beneficiaries and/or report to WFP country teams to ensure access to services and support should it have been sought (World Health Organization Guidelines).

Table 3 Predicted and Actual Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Risk/Limitation	Likelihood	Actual	Mitigation Strategy
Limited time at each location limits the quantity of primary data collected, particularly with government stakeholders.	High	Low	Triangulation of data across sources (primary and secondary) and methods (FGDs, Surveys, KII) to enhance robustness of findings and conclusions. The timeline for interviews was adjusted to accommodate respondent schedules; however, some key stakeholders were still unavailable during the review period.
Limited records/institutional memory of JP-RWEE beneficiaries and progress, especially for earlier elements of the review timeframe (2014-2016)	Medium	High	Ongoing desk review searches and consultations with UN Agency staff occurred throughout the review to bridge gaps in available data. However, the data on participating groups were not stored within a unified database, and quantifiable data on outcomes have not been routinely collected. As such, one group was identified for a discussion that had not participated in JP-RWEE activities, and cooperative lists were unavailable prior to 2017. In addition, the Performance Management Framework (PMF) remains incomplete due to inconsistent measurement strategies, primarily the percent increase in production and income.
Flow of discussion in the FGDs is limited and inadequate due to lack of understanding of activity and/or JP-RWEE, or due to sensitivity of the subject matter.	Low	No limitation	A full-day training with enumerators sought to pilot data collection approaches and practice methods for facilitating rapport. Survey questions were well understood by enumerators and respondents, and any clarifying questions were addressed promptly with the team leader.

## Data Coding and Analysis

The consultant led the analysis of collected qualitative and quantitative data. The consultant coded qualitative data into meaningful categories, enabling the organization of notes and determining themes or patterns common to KIIs/FGDs and responses that address specific indicators in the review matrix. Quantitative data was coded and analyzed according to standardized guidelines from the A-WEAI,<sup>12</sup> Dietary Diversity Scale,<sup>13</sup> and Food Insecurity Experience Scale<sup>14</sup> using STATA. Data was triangulated with data from other sources (desk review and monitoring data) to ensure reliability.

The A-WEAI comprises two sub-indexes, namely the degree to which women are empowered on the five domains of empowerment (5DE) within agriculture, and the Gender Parity Index (GPI), which measures gender parity within surveyed households. The formula for calculation of the Index is: WEAI = 0.9 x 5DE 0.1 x GPI.

Table 4: 5DE Indicators \*

Domain	Definition of Domain	Indicator(s)	Weight of indicator in 5DE sub-index
<b>Production</b>	Sole or joint decision making over food and cash-crop farming, livestock, and fisheries, and autonomy in agricultural production	Input in production decisions	1/5
<b>Resources</b>	Ownership, access to, and decision-making power over productive resources such as land, livestock, agricultural equipment, consumer durables, and credit	Ownership of assets	1/10
		Access to and decisions about credit	1/10
<b>Income</b>	Sole or joint control over income and expenditures	Control over use of income	1/5
<b>Leadership</b>	Membership in economic or social groups and comfort in speaking in public	Group membership	1/5
<b>Time</b>	Allocation of time to productive and domestic tasks and satisfaction with the available time for leisure activities	Workload	1/5

The 5DE sub-index assesses the degree to which participating women are empowered across the five domains examined by the A-WEAI. Each specific domain is weighted equally, as are the indicators within each of the domains. The 5DE is a measure of empowerment, rather than a measure of disempowerment; i.e. it is a positive measurement for ease of interpretation. As such, the sub-index describes participating women as 'empowered' or 'not yet empowered'. Under the 5DE, a woman is

<sup>12</sup> Malapit, Hazel, et al. "Instructional Guide on the Abbreviated Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (A-WEAI)." *Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute* (2015).

<sup>13</sup> Kennedy, Gina, et. al. "Guidelines for Measuring Household and Individual Dietary Diversity." *Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations* (2013).

<sup>14</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). "Applying the FIES." *FAO* (September 2017).

defined as empowered if she has adequate achievements in greater or equal to 80% of the weighted indicators; this threshold is called the ‘empowerment threshold’ within the nomenclature of the A-WEAI and 5DE. For those participating women that are not yet empowered under the 5DE, the measure captures the percentage of indicators in which those women did not yet reach adequate achievement. Finally, the 5DE score ranges from zero to one (0-1), where higher values indicate greater levels of empowerment. Table 2 (above) provides a summary of the 5DE domains and indicators employed in the analysis of the degree to which JP-RWEE surveyed beneficiaries are empowered or not yet empowered.

The 5DE is calculated by constructing the disempowerment index (M0) and then deconstructing this into a positive index of empowerment. The calculation is done using the formula  $5DE = 1 - M0$ . The disempowerment index is calculated using the Alkire Foster Method whereby the disempowered headcount (H) is multiplied by the average inadequacy score (A). The disempowered headcount (H) in this calculation reflects the proportion of participating women who are not yet empowered under the 5DE; whereas the inadequacy score (A) is the average percentage of indicators in which participating women who are not yet empowered did not yet achieve adequacy.<sup>15</sup> This can be summarized as  $5DE = 1 - H \times A$  for sake of brevity (wherein percentages can be exchanged for proportions between 0-1).

$$5DE = He + Hn (Aa)$$

Where He = % of women who are empowered, Hn = % of women who are not empowered, and Aa = % of dimensions in which disempowered women have adequate achievements

The second sub-index of the A-WEAI is the GPI, which measures women’s empowerment in comparison to the empowerment of men. Under the GPI, a woman is considered to have achieved ‘gender parity’ if her 5DE achievements are commensurate with the man in her household. The GPI then reflects the percentage of women who have achieved this relative parity. Unlike the 5DE, the GPI score is only calculated for women living in a household with at least one adult male. The GPI score (index 0-1) is calculated by multiplying the percent of women without gender parity HGPI (women with lower achievements in the 5DE than that of their male household counterpart) and the average empowerment gap IGPI (the average percentage shortfall in empowerment between women and men living in households without gender parity).

The discussion of findings related to the A-WEAI is provided under the ‘Impact’ review criteria.

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<sup>15</sup> USAID. “Feed the Future Rwanda Zone of Influence Baseline Report.” *Feed the Future, Rockville, MD: Westat* (2014).





**Elizabeth Kagohire, Vice President of Terimbere Mutegarugore Cooperative in Ngoma District.**

When I first heard of JP-RWEE, I heard that it was a programme intended to empower rural women, to help them to have self-confidence and build savings. I was selected to join and we have received so many trainings and benefits. I was trained on nutrition and modern agricultural practices, and provided with seeds for beans and avocado trees, as well as trainings on post harvest handling and hermetic storage bags to keep our harvest and maintain its quality over time. We even received trainings on gender equality.

Now, I am so grateful for this programme. It found me in bad days, when I was feeling hopeless and isolated because at the time my husband was sick, and it was only me who would take care of him. I also had to work to feed my children and pay their schools fees. It wasn't easy. I have a son who was in the middle of secondary school, but I had to tell him to stay home for the first term because of school fees. When JP-RWEE started and I joined the savings and lending group, I borrowed 5,000 RWF and started selling tomatoes. I quickly gained a profit of 5,000 RWF and paid back the loan, and I am still selling tomatoes. Now I pay for school fees for my children, I pay medical insurance, and I feed my family.

Even though in the beginning, my family did not appreciate that I was going to attend these activities, leaving my sick husband at home, he later started to see the benefits of the programme, and this changed him. Even the community was wondering what we were doing. Most cooperative groups here have failed before us, so they didn't believe that we would succeed, they thought it would just be something to waste our time on. But now they all can see our daily achievements and their attitudes have completely changed. Now women don't just sit and die from home, we are active people who can afford to pay for medical insurance and even give back to the community, training them to improve their own farming standards and to plan for their own development. The community can testify on the importance of this programme to beneficiaries and the community at large.

We, as beneficiaries, are determined to sustain all of the positive changes of this programme. And it helps that we are already monitored and supported by different government bodies. We will keep operating as a cooperative and we will find other donors. As long as we work as a cooperative, this will sustain us.



## III. Findings

### REVIEW CRITERIA 1: RELEVANCE

*Q1. To what extent have the specific defined outputs and outcomes of JP-RWEE been based on the identified needs and interests of rural women and communities in Rwanda?*

*Finding 1: JP-RWEE was designed with a strong understanding of the needs of rural women and their households at the community, district, national and international level through a national-level needs assessment and workshop, and maintains relevant to the stated needs of women through regular feedback collected by Implementing Partners.*

The Joint Programme on Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment (JP-RWEE) was designed starting from the global level across Agency Headquarters with a comprehensive needs assessment and gender analysis, which was subsequently expanded upon at both the national and institutional levels. With the design initiated amongst Headquarters of UN Women in New York and the Rome-based Agencies (FAO, IFAD and WFP), the objective of JP-RWEE was to expand partnerships and bridge the constituency for the overall purpose of women’s economic empowerment and rights security and in the context of the Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ‘Delivering as One’. The ‘RWEE Joint Programme Document’ provides strong justification for a global joint programme with this focus. JP-RWEE was officially launched during an event at the 67th UN General Assembly in New York on 27 September 2012, and again in Rome on 15 October 2012 on the occasion of the International Day of Rural Women.<sup>16</sup>

The ‘RWEE Joint Programme Document’ highlights the critical importance of rural women in the development of national economies, accounting for most of the agricultural labor force and main contributors to unpaid care work, including cooking and childcare. However, rural women and girls have restricted access to productive resources such as land, agricultural inputs, finance and credit, extension services, and technology, which in turn limits agricultural output and, subsequently, undermines household food and nutrition security. Due to the time spent on care work and subsistence agriculture, women have limited time to participate in on- and off-farm employment and formal market opportunities in the agriculture sector; gender differences in crop choices are also prescribed, with cash crops seen as the responsibility of men, while less lucrative crops for home consumption seen as the responsibility of women.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, constrained by time and restrictive gender norms, women are unable to significantly engage in community leadership and decision-making roles, limiting the relevance of local policies and programmes according to their everyday needs and priorities.

At the national-level, additional assessments and workshops were conducted to better understand the

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<sup>16</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women.” n.d.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

underlying causes of gender inequality in Rwanda. On 16 May 2013, JP-RWEE was officially launched in Rwanda through a country-level workshop attended by all participating UN Agencies, MINAGRI and the Minister of Agriculture/Permanent Secretary of Agriculture, Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), and other relevant ministries and public institutions, as well as farmer organizations and rural women representatives.<sup>18</sup> The WFP Director of Gender at Headquarters was also in attendance, along with other headquarters-level technical experts. The workshop helped to promote visibility of JP-RWEE, to generate commitments, as well as to validate the preliminary findings of a national needs assessment and the operational framework.<sup>19</sup>

The national needs assessment was conducted in partnership with the government and detailed the institutional environment enabling the intervention, and key areas for interventions, which subsequently guided the design of programme activities. The report highlighted the challenges with policy implementation at the community- and household-levels; while women and men have equal rights to land, finance, and political participation under the law, traditional gender norms and attitudes still limit women's use of land, access to finance, and participation in decision-making bodies. For example, 2012 data from National Bank of Rwanda showed that 78% of loans disbursed by banks went to men, while only 22% of loans were disbursed to women.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, women were not equally represented in cooperative groups or in agricultural extension and innovation platforms; in 2013, women represented 46% of cooperative members and 36% of Rwanda Agricultural Development Board staff.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the international- and national-level needs assessments, some Implementing Partners (IPs) conducted their own needs assessments to target activities at the start of the second programme phase (2016-19). The IPs' assessments gathered feedback from participating rural farmers to understand their needs and to facilitate participation and ownership of JP-RWEE, as part of their own internal accountability mechanisms.<sup>22</sup> An IP consulted describes this collaborative planning process:

“After developing terms of reference, we go for selection with the help of local authorities. It is a space for interacting with beneficiaries and local authorities to agree on what to do. For example, if we want to take some climate adaptation practices, we have to do an assessment of beneficiary readiness, so we do not promote the use of solar energy while they really need water, and we do this by assessing beneficiaries. We listen to their ideas and local authority suggestions and then implement it.”<sup>23</sup>

The data collected from the analyses offered quality information on gaps in services from the perspective of beneficiary groups. For example, a rapid assessment conducted by CARE International in 2018 revealed that while the number of women in leadership positions was growing both within and outside of cooperatives, there were still skills gaps hindering women's full progression into leadership in

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<sup>18</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>19</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>20</sup> National Bank of Rwanda, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Bizoza, A.R. “A Joint Country Programme Document by FAO, IFAD, UN Women, and WFP in Partnership with the Government of Rwanda.” *National University of Rwanda* (July 16, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>23</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

the private-sector and initiation of off-farm activities, primarily financial literacy and leadership skills. Of CARE International's 2,081 beneficiaries, 284 members were in leadership positions at the village level (227 female and 57 male), however, the IP saw that groups were primarily relying on cooperative resources for initiating income-generating activities (IGAs). CARE's Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) model responds to this gap in order to deepen financial inclusion and promote IGAs.<sup>24</sup>

Regular needs assessments are also integrated into annual planning requirements and reporting procedures at the Agency-level, included as part of funding applications and annual reports, in order to ensure ongoing relevance of programme activities for its beneficiaries. In the 2015 Annual Report, similar gaps were identified as were later noted by IPs: a "lack of market intelligence and negotiation skills" was limiting women's access to markets, "limited financial literacy skills" prevented women from preparing bankable business plans, and a generally low level of literacy amongst beneficiaries obstructed women's ability to fully participate in training activities.<sup>25</sup> A monitoring visit from the Global Coordinator in 2017 expanded upon regular assessment and reporting requirements in order to provide recommendations to improve and streamline programme activities, and provide a road map towards a more responsive and coordinated approach to programme implementation.<sup>26</sup>

While there still remain some challenges and delays in activities addressing all of the needs of rural women highlighted in programme planning documents, assessments, and reports, regular check-ins on the 'relevance' of JP-RWEE has ensured programme activities remain responsive to programme outcomes and the stated needs of beneficiaries. As highlighted by one government stakeholder interviewed, the need for JP-RWEE activities is great: "our sector has the highest rate of unemployment, poverty, and primitive understandings and perceptions mainly on work and gender, so this project to operate here in my cell helped me and my community to gain the skills, knowledge, and equipment that helps us to improve our livelihood."<sup>27</sup> However, limited and/or delayed activities focusing on leadership development and time-saving technologies, for example, has constrained achievement of some intended outcomes and identified needs of the population served. Furthermore, while addressing unpaid care work and women's limited time for activities were identified needs constraining women's empowerment across international-, national-, and institutional-level assessments, there is no explicit output or outcome reflected in the PMF. The limits to intended and unintended outcome achievement will be further explored under 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency'.

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<sup>24</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>25</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. "2015 Annual Report: Rwanda." *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online Gateway* (December 2015).

<sup>26</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>27</sup> FGD, Nyaruguru Cooperative.

**Q2. To what extent is JP-RWEE aligned with national policies and priorities and to the international and regional normative frameworks for gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of inclusive growth?**

*Finding 2: JP-RWEE recruitment is based on clear human rights-based approaches; while, recruiting marginalized groups into cooperatives sometimes resulted in unintended effects at the onset of activities, such as increased experience of social stigma or household disputes as a result of being included in public spaces, recruitment strategies mostly resulted in improved social inclusion through formal registration of cooperatives and integration of the most vulnerable into pre-existing support systems/structures.*

JP-RWEE design documents and plans show a clear and purposeful adherence to human rights-based approaches and related principles, particularly in the recruitment of participants, including universality and inalienability; indivisibility; inter-dependence and inter-relatedness; equality and non-discrimination; participation and inclusion; and accountability under the rule of law.

JP-RWEE beneficiaries were selected for the programme using relevant criteria, primarily targeting rural women living in poverty and dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. In addition, participation from communities and Implementing Partners (IPs) was sought in order to ensure selection was inclusive of the most vulnerable; however, specific selection criteria and geographic locality of groups shifted slightly year-on-year. The initial recruitment of participants, conducted with financial support of the Norwegian Government in 2014, identified two cooperative groups in Bugesera and Rwamagana Districts (Tangumucyo Ngeruka and Cyimbazi Munyiginya, respectively) to receive services in 2015.<sup>28</sup> Early partnerships were developed with local authorities at the Sector-level, whereby local government-employed agronomists were appointed to assist in the daily follow up of agricultural production. However, the geographic focus shifted to Kayonza, Kirehe, Nyaruguru, Nyagatare and Rubavu in 2015, and it was not clear from annual reports nor participation rosters whether the two initial groups received support or whether they were made aware that they would no longer be included in activities.

From 2015, the selection process primarily consisted of consolidating pre-existing savings groups and other women's associations into larger cooperatives, providing both cohesion but also accountability in the formal legal structure of cooperatives. As one group-member explained, "[w]e were originally an association of people who united together for the purpose of saving and helping each other, then local government connected us to FAO that helped us to receive legal status of a cooperative and we were trained on rules and regulations of [operating] cooperatives in Rwanda."<sup>29</sup>

Further refinement and targeting of participating groups was informed by a joint assessment with Implementing Agencies and MINAGRI in 2017, whereby beneficiary groups were targeted as the most vulnerable, looking for recently created groups. The ten (10) groups selected (Twitezimbere Kiyonza,

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<sup>28</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. "2014 Annual Report: Rwanda." *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2014).

<sup>29</sup> FGD, Nyaruguru Cooperative.



COTECO, Abahangudushya, Bimpinduka, Urumuri, Terimbere Mugore wa Sake, Duhuzimbaraga Murama, Kubinya and Abaticyngambi) were operating in three sectors: Kirehe and Ngoma in Eastern Province and Nyaruguru in Southern Province. In addition to the pre-existing members, an additional 912 beneficiaries were recruited and integrated into groups yielding a total served population of 2,083 (1,713 women and 370 men) across three districts from 2017 – 2019.

While recruiting individual beneficiaries, JP-RWEE made purposeful efforts to target the most vulnerable individuals. In doing so, the beneficiaries were recruited from marginalized or under-privileged groups, such as those households from lower socioeconomic status categories (referred to as Ubudehe Levels one and two in Rwanda); women living with HIV/AIDS; widows or single mothers; survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) (including sex workers); teenage mothers; and other marginalized groups. IPs worked closely with local government authorities, as one partner explains: “[w]e have standard criteria, we target vulnerable people, we present our criteria to the local authorities from the district to the sector, [then] from the sector to the villages - so we target women with disabilities, widows, single moms.”<sup>30</sup> Emphasis was given to consultation with local authorities when it came to selection of beneficiaries, as one KII explained: “selection was mainly done by local authorities, and it involves highest percentage of women as a programme that focuses on women’s empowerment.”<sup>31</sup> Stakeholders pointed to the popularity of the programme to existing groups and associations, reinforcing the need for targeted selection: one government stakeholder explained, “I participated in the process of selecting vulnerable individuals to attend this programme. All the people and associations wanted to join this programme, but we mainly selected the vulnerable people in the community.”<sup>32</sup>

Recruiting such marginalized groups into participating groups sometimes resulted in unintended effects, highlighting the communities’ stigmatized perception of these beneficiaries at the onset of programme activities. For example, parents of single mothers or husbands of beneficiaries did not understand the purpose of meetings and disapproved of their participation and movement outside of the household: “At the beginning, our husbands did not understand the purpose of RWEE, which caused a lot of arguments and conflicts in our families.”<sup>33</sup> Neighbors also expressed initial resistance to women’s participation in groups: “There [were] neighbors who were jealous of us, because they didn’t understand why we were chosen to participate.”<sup>34</sup> Upon seeing the indirect benefits of participation, household and community members encouraged women to attend group meetings and trainings:

“At the beginning of this project, my mom didn’t understand it well. I live with her and I am responsible for all activities at home, she has back problems so spending a day at meetings and attending workshops created some conflicts, but now she even supports me because of the things I have achieved, like obtaining property, income and skills.”<sup>35</sup>

As such, JP-RWEE worked to reduce stigma and integrate these vulnerable beneficiaries into the groups and encourage active participation, transitioning many into awareness-building advocates and trainers.

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<sup>30</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>31</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>32</sup> KII, Government Stakeholder.

<sup>33</sup> FGD, Nyaruguru Cooperative.

<sup>34</sup> FGD, Nyaruguru Cooperative.

<sup>35</sup> KII, Cooperative Member.

Often a pre-existing group was expanded and divided up into several groups in order to accommodate new entrants from vulnerable groups. For example, a woman from Kamonyi explains: “[w]e were a cooperative before, and Oxfam selected other vulnerable women – mostly widows – and we formed five (5) groups to make up this cooperative.”

However, there is evidence to suggest that some women still face constraints to participation due to cultural norms embedded amongst the group members. For example, one male member surveyed believed women did not have the capacity to lead: “the cooperative leaders are not capable; give [group members] more trainings on leadership, and train men because women do not know what to do or what is required [of leaders].” Furthermore, one stakeholder indicated that women with children were occasionally excluded, explaining “[w]e select vulnerable persons, poor persons with small or no land, illiterate persons, persons with dynamism in community who are natural leaders who can help women to understand, HIV positive people, those with disability, women with babies. In some cooperatives, women with babies are excluded because [members] believe they don’t work well or enough.”<sup>36</sup>

Single mothers’ ability to participate to the same extent as others was supported by women within discussions: “I am a single mom with young twins, the challenge I face most is to find someone who can stay with my kids at home for me to attend cooperative meetings and trainings.”<sup>37</sup> Women with severe illnesses also experienced constraints to participating in activities and achieving some desired outcomes: “I need support of a sewing machine, or any other thing that does not require much energy [as I am unable to participate in agribusiness as much] due to illness.”<sup>38</sup> Members also felt that women with higher levels of literacy were at an advantage: “It could be better...if the programme could provide trainings for the illiterate so they could become developed in the same way as literate people.”<sup>39</sup> While cooperative guidelines encourage the rotation of members in leadership positions and the sharing of knowledge received from training, prevailing social and gender norms, perceptions, and power dynamics have presented challenges to the implementation of these policies and disruptions to cohesive group dynamic:

“We have misunderstanding with the cooperative's leadership. The President seems to want to be the head of everything and have ownership of our production or money. Mostly, she does not want to hold new elections, she does not seem to cooperate with members. We have news that there are cooperative's properties that she took over. Our cooperative is not advancing because of these disputes.”<sup>40</sup>

“Give us training collectively, we who take trainings, when we go back to train our colleagues, they are not able to understand us well; they think that we only received money in trainings and it creates misunderstanding between members.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>37</sup> FGD, Nyaruguru Cooperative.

<sup>38</sup> 2019 Household Survey, Cooperative Member.

<sup>39</sup> 2019 Household Survey, Cooperative Member.

<sup>40</sup> 2019 Household Survey, Cooperative Member.

<sup>41</sup> 2019 Household Survey, Cooperative Leader.

Such dynamics were also observed within some focused discussions. For example, in Musanze, a group no longer served by JP-RWEE had a large number of men holding leadership positions despite greater representation of women amongst group members. In addition, within observed focus groups, women with higher levels of education were more likely to hold leadership positions.

***Finding 3:** JP-RWEE aligns with the country context, national legislation and constitutional reforms relating to women’s empowerment, and policies such as the ‘Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies (EDPRS): Rapid Economic Transformation, Youth Productivity and Employment, Rural Development, Accountable Governance’ and the government’s policies on agricultural development including Umurenge Vision 2020 and Vision 2050, the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), and the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture.*

Rwanda is the second most densely populated country in Africa (after Mauritius)<sup>42</sup> and has seen a period of rapid economic growth and poverty reduction for the last few decades, maintaining an average economic growth rate of 7.5% from 2007 to 2017.<sup>43</sup> There is some evidence to suggest that this economic growth has resulted in reductions in poverty and inequality. The World Bank estimates that the GDP per capita, when adjusted for purchasing power, grew from \$507 in 1995 to \$2,254 in 2018.<sup>44</sup> The 2014 Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV4) estimated a drop in the poverty rate from 45 percent in 2011 to 39 percent in 2014, with inequality also falling in this period (shown by a reduction in the calculated Gini coefficient from 0.49 to 0.45 over the same years).<sup>45</sup> The national poverty rate was estimated to have dropped even further to 38% in 2017.<sup>46</sup>

With land being a limited resource in one of Africa's most densely populated countries, agricultural initiatives, such as JP-RWEE, that enhance resilience to weather-related shocks through climate-resilient agriculture, consolidate land, and enhance productivity have served to address inequality in a country where 83% of the population lives in rural areas and more than 80% work in subsistence farming.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, agricultural innovations have yielded results: since 2007 there has been negligible change in the total area of land under cultivation, and yet also substantial increases in yields for staple crops (maize, wheat, Irish potato, and cassava). Since 2004, MINAGRI has developed a five to six years Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture (PSTA) to implement the Vision 2020, the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies (EDPRS- 1&2, 2008-18) and the new National Strategy for Transformation (NST1). These initiatives are driven by an underlying approach that seeks to transition Rwandan agriculture from being largely related to subsistence towards a commercialized agricultural industry. With the ultimate goal of improving rural women’s livelihoods and rights through interventions targeting improved food and nutrition security and increased income opportunities, JP-

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<sup>42</sup> World Bank. "Population density (people per sq. km of land area)." *Population Density Report* (Updated 2018).

<sup>43</sup> World Bank. "The World Bank in Rwanda." *World Bank* (Updated 2019).

<sup>44</sup> World Bank. "GDP per capita, PPP" *World Bank* (Updated 2019).

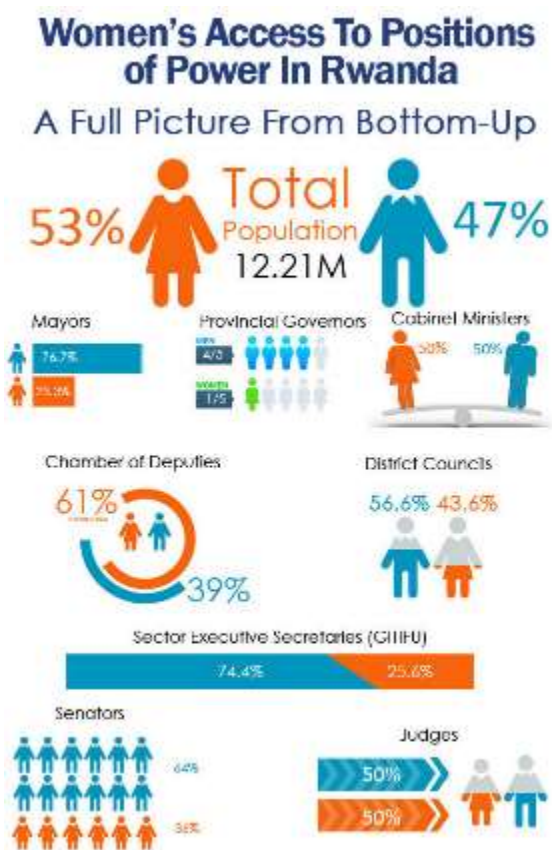
<sup>45</sup> National Institute of Statistics. "Rwanda – Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey 2013-2014." *NISR Rwanda*.

<sup>46</sup> World Bank. "The World Bank in Rwanda." *World Bank* (Updated 2019).

<sup>47</sup> FAO. "Country Programming Framework for Rwanda 2013–2018." *Kigali: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations* (2013).

RWEE aligns well with Rwanda’s strategies for growth.

Furthermore, Rwanda is a top performer amongst African countries in terms of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) with a gender inequality index of 0.804<sup>48</sup> Rwanda has gender sensitive laws including the liberal constitution, which provides for 30 percent of seats and representation of women in decision-making bodies.<sup>49</sup> And Rwanda has followed through on this policy, with women currently representing 61% of seats in Parliament, 36% of seats in Senate, 50% of Ministers in Cabinet, 50% of Judges in Supreme Court, and 61% of the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>50</sup> However, representation at the lower administrative levels of government are lower, with only 26% of sector executive secretaries, 23% of mayors, and 20% of provincial governors represented by women (see extracted infographic, Figure 1).<sup>51</sup> JP-RWEE seeks to address women’s access to leadership roles at the community-level through the formalization of women-led cooperatives and trainings on cooperative management and leadership skills for women.



Policy successes related to women’s empowerment have included a sustained commitment to women’s rights, including ratification of several international agreements and treaties (e.g. the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights; Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW]; the Convention on the Political Rights of Women; UN Resolutions 1820 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security; and the Great lakes Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children), a commitment to gender balance in parliament, and investment into programmes aimed at the reduction of discrimination against women. Women’s rights and empowerment are also pursued by MIGEPROF.<sup>52</sup> This government agency is mandated to ensure strategic coordination of policy implementation in the area of gender, family, women’s empowerment and children’s issues. Other agencies constituting the National Gender Machinery include the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), the National Women’s Council (NWC) and the Rwanda Women Parliamentary Forum. JP-RWEE contributes to the National Gender Machinery through its dual accountability framework. At the individual level, JP-

Figure 1 Women’s Formal Leadership (*The Chronicles, Rwanda*)

<sup>48</sup> World Economic Forum. “The Global Gender Gap Report.” *World Economic Forum* (2018).

<sup>49</sup> Government of Rwanda. The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda (2003 revised in 2015), Article 10.

<sup>50</sup> Cyiza, Theogene & Fred Mwasa. “Women’s Access to Positions of Power in Rwanda: A Full Picture from the Bottom-up.” *The Chronicles, Rwanda* (March 2019).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Government of Rwanda. Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, Website (Updated 2019).

RWEE beneficiaries advancing into leadership positions frequently take up roles within the NWC at the village-, sector-, and district-levels: 24% (10) of the 42 sampled women reporting leadership were elected into the NWC, providing a space for them to influence policy and programmes starting at the community-level. At the national-level, the ministries within the National Gender Machinery have engaged in policy dialogues, with representation from FAO, UN Women, and the JP-RWEE Global Advisory Council, to identify gender gaps in agriculture, which have subsequently informed the development of the PSTA4.

The PSTA4, funded with a USD \$100 million credit agreements with the World Bank,<sup>53</sup> focuses on four priority areas: (1) Innovation and Extension; (2) Productivity and Resilience; (3) Inclusive Markets and Value Addition; (4) Enabling Environment and Responsive Institutions. The JP-RWEE and PSTA4 strategies are interconnected and share activities and indicators, including increasing small scale farmers use of improved seeds, terracing and irrigation methods, implementing nutrition-sensitive agriculture and monitoring food and nutrition security, and facilitating private sector investment in fruit and vegetable production through the demonstration of better technologies, like greenhouses and small-scale irrigation. Therefore, JP-RWEE directly contributes to the national strategy.

The GoR has also implemented various legal provisions to support equal land rights for women and men. The first of these was law No. 22/99 of 12/11/1999 on Matrimonial Regimes, Liberalities, and Successions (or the “Inheritance Law”); this provided that all children would inherit property without discrimination according to gender (Article 50). The 2015 changes to the 2003 Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda furthered this effort, recognizing equal rights of women and men (specifically Articles 26, 27, and 28), which provided for equal property rights. Furthermore, the national land policy of 02/2004 (and the Organic Land Law No. 08/2005) determined the use and management of land in Rwanda, protecting women’s rights to land. Recent land reform measures (e.g. land titling project since 2009) have had further success in supporting women’s rights to land. Through these measures, 64% of land titles<sup>54</sup> were owned by women or co-owned by men and women in a household by 2016,<sup>55</sup> These policies on women’s representation and rights provide a strong foundation from which JP-RWEE can work from to achieve its third and fourth outcomes of increased leadership and a more gender responsive policy environment. However, as will be explored further within ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’, progress towards strengthening the policy environment and women’s participation has been delayed, especially towards influencing and monitoring policies on land use in support of the JP-RWEE indicator “proportion of rural women owning land out of agriculture land owners in targeted areas, disaggregated by individual ownership and jointly with men.” Despite alignment of this indicator with the SDG Indicators 5.a.1a, “proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex” and 5.a.1b, “share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure.”

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<sup>53</sup> Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. “Government of Rwanda – World Bank Sign Agreement to Support the Transformation of the Agriculture Sector.” *MINECOFIN* (June 1, 2018).

<sup>54</sup> Schaefer, Lisa. “Land Reform in Rwanda.” Center for Public Impact (December 21, 2017).

<sup>55</sup> Mukahigiro, A. “Secure Women’s Land Rights in Rwanda: Investigating its Impact on Food Security.” *Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation of the University of Twente, Netherlands* (2015).



*Finding 4: JP-RWEE is aligned with UNEG gender equality principles, JP-RWEE partner global mandates, country office strategies, international normative frameworks and UN global development strategies (SDGs, Rio 20+) – directly contributing to the UNDAP I and UNDAP II*

Within this context, development partners have made strong commitments to supporting women's full access to productive resources, assets and services, the strengthening of their food production systems, their ability to consume food of good nutritious value, and their agency at all levels of decision-making related to food and nutrition security.

JP-RWEE's implementation strategy, with its focus upon consolidating women's associations into cooperatives, is also aligned with UN Women's approach towards women's empowerment. For example, UN Women indicated that "[g]ender equality is our core mandate, normative framework and coordination amongst the UNCT. Women's participation is at our core, we focus on political and other participation including in cooperatives. This is the main point of leverage."<sup>56</sup> At the operational level, JP-RWEE builds upon UN Women's experience in advocating for women's land rights through legal reforms and supporting the empowerment of women to claim these rights, as well as WFP's food assistance interventions as they relate to the promotion of rural women's access to market opportunities, and FAO's Farmer Field Schools for improving agricultural practices and increasing farmer production.

In addition to contributing to national strategies for agriculture development, the JP-RWEE country implementation plan also contributes to UN global development strategies and national coordination mechanisms, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Plans (UNDAP I and UNDAP II). For example, in the first phase of programme implementation, JP-RWEE contributed to *UNDAP I Outcome 1.2* wherein Rwandans can tap into and benefit from expanded international, regional and local markets, and improved agriculture value chains, as well as *UNDAP I Output 1.2.1*<sup>57</sup>, relating to strengthened agricultural innovation and value chains, through trainings on entrepreneurship, access to trainings and equipment for agro-processing and provision of greenhouses for increasing production of high-value crops, like tomatoes.

With the alignment of the second UNDAP (2018-2023) with the GoR's National Strategy for Transformation, and the integration of JP-RWEE into the UNDAP II joint programmes, Implementing Agencies are committed to the three priority areas of economic, social, and governance transformations. As such, JP-RWEE activities and outcomes align with all six expected UNDAP II Outcome for UN cooperation aimed at: (1) sustainable economic growth that generates decent work; (2) more equitable, sustainable and productive management of natural resources; (3) increased and equitable access to education, health, nutrition and water; (4) resilience to natural and man-made shocks; (5) enhanced gender equality; and (6) increased participation of citizens in democratic and development processes.

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<sup>56</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>57</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. "2015 Annual Report: Rwanda." *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2015).

Through commitment to the UNDAP II, JP-RWEE directly contributes to four Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): SDG-1 No Poverty, SDG-2 Zero Hunger, SDG-5 Gender Equality, and SDG-17 Partnerships for the Goals. JP-RWEE is also aligned with recent developments in gender equality principles, as outlined in the 56<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). In this session the priority theme regarded “the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges.”<sup>58</sup>

Finally, JP-RWEE outcomes are closely aligned with the outcomes measured by the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), largely as a result of its contributions to the PSTA4, which developed its indicator framework with reference to the CAADP indicators. Specifically, JP-RWEE is aligned with outcomes covered under the CAADP framework including increased agricultural production and productivity; increased intra-African regional trade; functioning of markets; expanded local agro-industry and value chain development inclusive of women; increased resilience of livelihoods and risk mitigation; and improved management of natural resources for sustainable agricultural practices.

JP-RWEE is informed by the persistent need to engage donor coordination mechanisms that bring rural women’s rights and livelihoods into the core functioning of agricultural aid delivery. Specifically, the OECD has reported that of US \$18.4 billion agricultural aid expenditure between 2002 and 2008, only 5.6% included a gender focus.<sup>59</sup> Including a gender focus in agricultural aid expenditure would contribute to reductions in gender inequality in programme countries, and such, JP-RWEE focused on influencing gender strategies through the Agriculture Sub-sector Working Group on Gender (AGSSWG). Integration and influence in AGSSWG builds upon ongoing efforts by UN Women to integrate rural women and girls programming into macroeconomic policies and work by FAO linking the underperformance of agricultural sectors in developing countries to rural women’s asymmetrical access to resources. Linking the underlying causes of gender inequality to drivers of agricultural output losses and food insecurity helps to build a case for inclusive growth policies.

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<sup>58</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “RWEE Programme Document.” *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online.*

<sup>59</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “RWEE Programme Document.” *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online.*

## REVIEW CRITERIA 2: EFFECTIVENESS

### *Q3. To what extent does JP-RWEE contribute to rural women's improved livelihoods and rights security in Rwanda?*

This section is organized around the four primary outcomes of JP-RWEE, which contribute to the overall goal of rural women's livelihoods and rights: (1) rural women have improved food and nutrition security; (2) rural women have increased income to secure their livelihoods; (3) rural women have enhanced leadership and participation in their communities and in rural institutions, and in shaping laws, policies and programmes; (4) a more gender responsive policy environment is secured for the economic empowerment of rural women.

*Finding 5: JP-RWEE has contributed to rural women's improved livelihoods through improved agricultural practices resulting in increased vegetable and livestock production, diet and nutrition, and attributable income gains.*

#### **Outcome 1. Rural women have improved food and nutrition security**

JP-RWEE has contributed towards improvements in agricultural production and increased livestock of women farmers in targeted areas. Through extension services, the programme has provided quality seeds as well as training for improved methods of production resulting in increased harvests. Rural women in target areas are planting selected seeds, using modern agricultural practices, benefiting from rainwater harvesting structures to store flowing water, and utilizing hermetic bags to store grain. In addition, women in target areas reported using their savings and credit from the cooperative groups to buy additional land, leading to increased harvests.

At baseline, 974 women were accessing extension services with a target to connect women to local agronomists and provide trainings to 2,604 women by 2020.<sup>60</sup> Trainings were provided on greenhouses and other climate resilient agricultural methods, including on field preparation and spacing, fertilization, irrigation, crop rotation and disease control, and ten cooperatives (10) benefited from exchange visits with other high-performing cooperatives and attendance at national agricultural shows in 2014 and 2015 (i.e. 54 women). In 2018, 1,327 members (1,088 women) were accessing extension services (64% of 2,083 overall beneficiaries and of 1,713 female beneficiaries); and, based on the 2019 survey sample, 71% (95) of group members overall and 70% (78) of female group members were accessing extension services - including training on agro-ecology and/or participation in Farmer Field Schools - representing 1,479 members or 1,199 women (a 23% increase from baseline).

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<sup>60</sup> Due to changes in funding and timelines, which will be explored further under efficiency, fewer women were reached (1,713 of 2,083 overall members) than originally targeted for in 2017, making the target of 2,604 women unattainable.

Table 5: Progress Towards Outcome Indicator 1.1 – Agricultural and Livestock Production

Indicator	Baseline (2013) <sup>61</sup>	Target (2020)	Current (2019)
<b>% change in agricultural production of women farmers in targeted areas disaggregated by crop production and livestock</b>	30% <sup>62</sup>	50%	<p>39% of female members felt the harvest yield from the first season of 2019, was larger than their harvest from the first season in 2018</p> <p>28% of female group members experienced livestock production increases</p> <p>2x – 8x increase reported (i.e. 100% to 700% increase)</p>

### Crop Production

Figure 2 (below) summarizes the primary crops cultivated during the last year by participating beneficiaries. Consistent with national-level proportions,<sup>63</sup> maize and beans form the majority of crops cultivated.

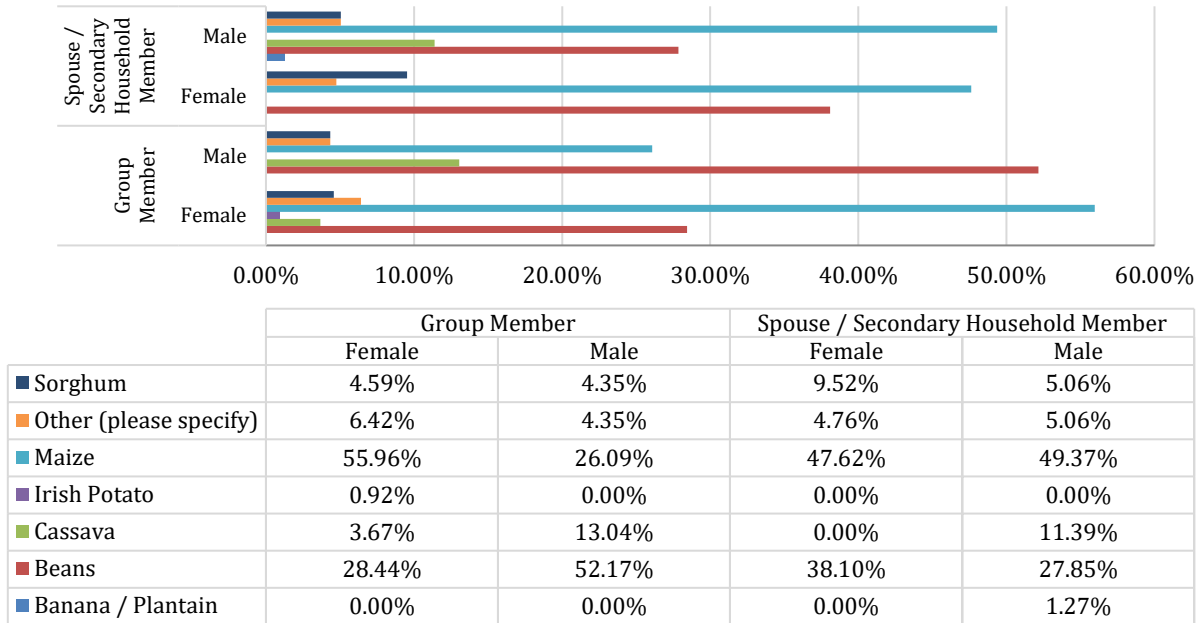
Amongst the sampled respondents, 97% of female group members utilized an average of 3.5 different improved production techniques, well above the target of 60%. Figure 3 (below) summarizes the most frequently mentioned production methods adopted by sampled group members. Specifically, the most frequently cited technique used for agricultural production was the use of inorganic (chemical) fertilizer – of which 91% of men and women indicated they had adopted the practice. Similarly, the use of organic fertilizer was prominent, and the use of multi-cropping. It is important to highlight that while both erosion control measures and improved seeds were adopted techniques, there were notable disparities in use amongst male and female members surveyed, which go unexplained by focus group data and may warrant further exploration into women’s access to and use of improved seeds and fruit trees after distribution and from other sources: 68% of women and 57% of men surveyed reported receipt of agricultural inputs such as bio-fortified beans and fruit tree seedlings from JP-RWEE, however fewer women are using such inputs. Irrigation practices and the application of lime were less frequently cited practices adopted by participating farmers.

<sup>61</sup> Baseline data was not collected in 2013/14 at the start of JPRWEE in Rwanda; as such, secondary data was gathered on the intervention areas in 2017. Most reports referenced for the reconstructed baseline are from 2013, providing a broad understanding of most indicators, though not reflective of the exact situation of members.

<sup>62</sup> As mentioned within the methodological limitations, the baseline provided is already a percentage change, and not an actual average in production yields. Furthermore, no information was made available during the review process on the unit of measurement used to calculate the change in agricultural production at baseline (i.e. metric tons, kilograms, etc.). Therefore, it is not possible to calculate a percentage change from baseline with such limited information, instead farmers reported experiences of yield increases, which was triangulated against reports of yield changes in focused discussions. Further to this point, there were no clear assessments of production provided in annual reports: the 2017 annual report referenced farmers’ self-reported increases of 50% on average, and noted that tangible data on production and nutrition would be collected in May 2018, however no such data were presented in the 2018 annual report.

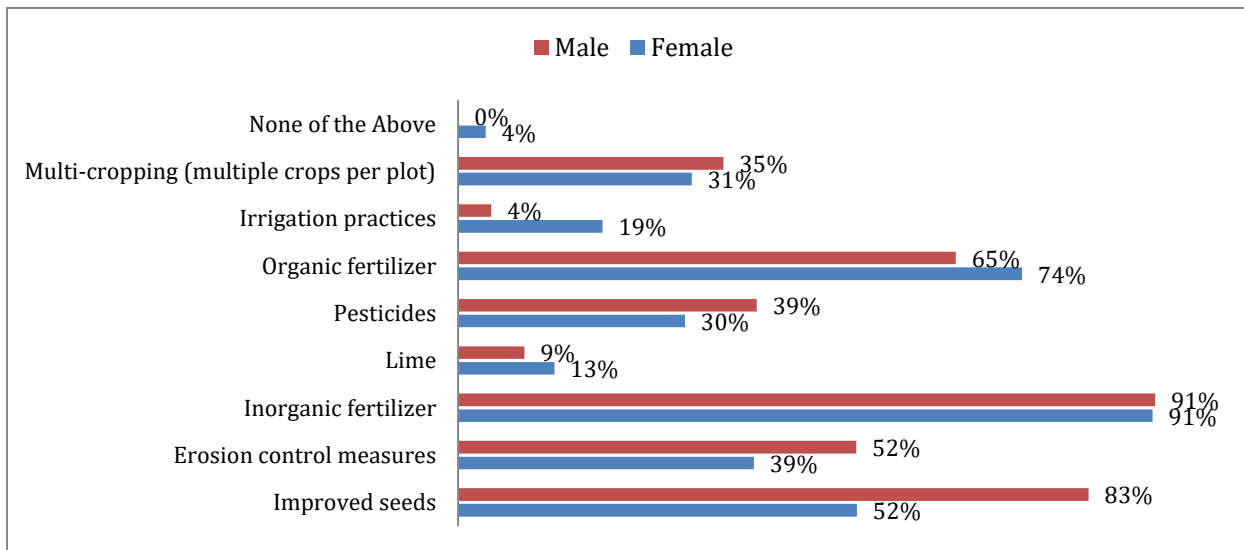
<sup>63</sup> FAO. “FAO in Rwanda: Rwanda at a Glance.” *FAO: Online* (2019).

Figure 2: What is the primary crop you cultivated in the last year?



\* Figure data includes all sampled group members (n= 133) and sampled household members (n= 98) across current districts, (group member: female= 109, male= 24 ; household member: female= 21 , male= 77).

Figure 3: Adoption of improved production methods among JP-RWEE group members (frequency of mention, %)



\* Figure data includes all sampled group members across current districts (Kirehe, Ngoma, Nyaruguru), n=133, (female = 109, male = 24).

Initially, focus group respondents reported that they felt planting single crops on a given plot of land resulted in higher yields as compared to mixed cropping; however, as a result of their participation in the trainings, beneficiaries reported to have learned about companion planting. Regarding single crop and mixed cultivation, one beneficiary explained “[w]e were trained on cultivating single crops and also how you can mix crops that can grow together, which also increased our harvests...[together] with the application of fertilizer, I have seen an increase of 100kg of maize to 800kg of maize.”

“Trainings on using composite fertilizers with chemical fertilizers increased my harvest from 100 kilograms to 300 kilograms of maize within the same piece of land. And it helped my colleagues here, like [Beatha], she used to harvest 100 kilograms of maize and recently she harvested 800 kilograms of maize.”

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Through participation in JP-RWEE’s trainings, the beneficiaries reported learning how to reduce soil erosion by planting certain types of trees and plants on or adjacent to their land. In addition, beneficiaries reported mixing organic manure from the livestock with chemical fertilizer, which has led to increased harvests - in some cases beneficiaries reported around eight (8) times higher yields attributed to this practice. Use of improved production techniques and seeds have helped the beneficiaries in target areas improve their yields. For example, a FGD participant from Kamonyi, who no longer received support from JP-RWEE, explained how she continued to use agriculture practices: “the use of fertilizers and planting selected seeds has helped me to increase yields.”

FGD participants’ perceptions of the trainings received were generally positive and specific to individual practices that resulted in increased yields. A FGD participant from Musanze explained: “[a]fter receiving trainings on agriculture practices I started terracing, mulching and mixing crops with friendly trees to reduce soil erosion in order to gain more harvests.” Several focus group participants indicated an awareness of the taught climate resilient agricultural techniques and its contribution to driving increased harvests. Beneficiaries reported having learned improved methods to prevent soil erosion on their farming plots. For example, one of the respondents explained: “[p]lanting of fruit trees plays a role in climate justice and even prevention of soil erosion.”

Greenhouses were also provided as a climate resilient agriculture practice: 12 greenhouses were installed in 2015<sup>64</sup> and 14 greenhouses in 2016,<sup>65</sup> helping cooperative groups to increase tomato production, access new markets, and generate income. According to a cooperative leader in Kayonza District, the greenhouse helped to “secure a market to supply tomatoes to a supermarket in Kigali, and this increased the price from RWF 300 per kilogram to RWF 700 per kilogram due to the high quality standards.”<sup>66</sup> Another cooperative member interviewed in Musanze also reported increased yields and access to new markets by selling to hotels in the district; however, over the past few years, the cooperative found it difficult to meet demands with only one greenhouse, and eventually lost some buyers.

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<sup>64</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “2015 Annual Report: Rwanda.” *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2015).

<sup>65</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “2016 Annual Report: Rwanda.” *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2016).

<sup>66</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “2015 Annual Report: Rwanda.” *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2015).



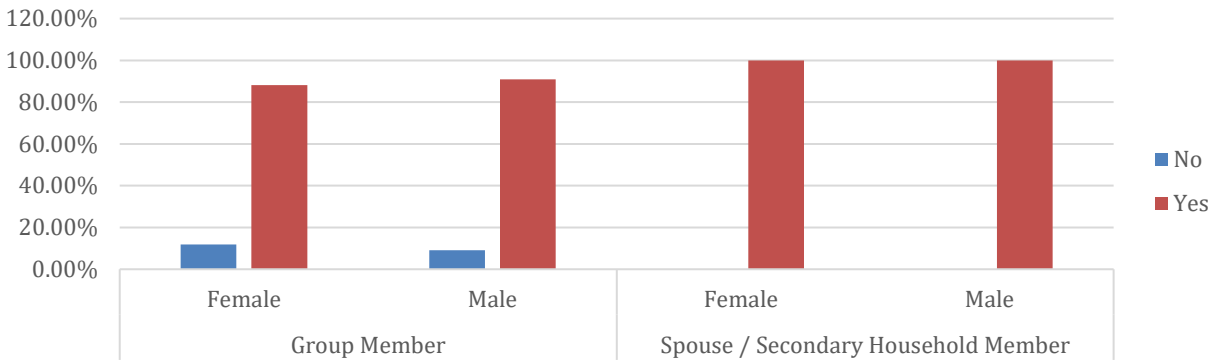
Others pointed to the improvements in irrigation infrastructure. For example, one stakeholder from Kirehe District explained “[the provision] of water irrigation pipes has allowed the beneficiaries in target areas to cultivate in three (3) seasons, leading to increased production.” Another participant concurs, suggesting that “[after] the construction of this water collection [infrastructure] we started to cultivate in three (3) seasons which has increased our production [in a given year].” Time-saving interventions, such as rainwater harvesting structures and irrigation ponds, were accessed by 53% (59) of women surveyed and only 17% (4) of men. Focus group respondents in Ngoma noted the time-saving benefits of these interventions: “the water harvesting system helped me to get water from home; now I am not walking for miles in search of water.”

“For those who got a chance to have a water harvesting system, they now enjoy the benefits of having water at home. Children used to fetch water from a distance, and now they can concentrate on their education instead of wandering for water.”

Another FGD participant from Musanze indicated the sustained value of skills acquisition through life skills trainings, like lessons on goal setting through GALS, explaining: “I didn't go to a school where I could get these skills of setting targets, visions and a way of evaluating myself and my progress. This helped me to set a target of increasing my potatoes harvest from 800kg to 1500kg by 2020 and I have taken measures of achieving this like attending workshops on potatoes farming, using hybrid seeds, and applying fertilizers.” Another FGD respondent in Musanze agreed on the value of planning in agriculture production: “GALS trainings included the module of setting targets and evaluation techniques. I started planting garlic on 1 hectare (ha) of land, am targeting to extend it to 2 ha and it has brought in more profits than potatoes. I am expecting RWF 3 million profit from garlic harvests.” Another FGD participant explained “we were trained on how to make composite fertilizer from grasses, cow dungs and other animal wastes plus applying it alongside the chemical fertilizers which increased my harvests. Using water harvest system helped me to collect water for home use, irrigation, and even collect it in order to reduce soil erosion and land degradation. After receiving training on agriculture practices I started terracing, mulching and mixing crops with friendly trees to reduce soil erosion in order to gain more harvests.” These testimonies point to the wide-variety of skill-sets covered in training sessions from Agencies and IPs, and the degree to which skills acquisition was valued by participating beneficiaries with regards to increased yields and production.

Figure 4 illustrates this general perception and attribution of increased agricultural production amongst survey respondents. Specifically, as defined in Table 5 for female members, 40% of group members overall (53 total; 42 female, 11 male) felt the yields from their primary crops had increased from the first season of 2018 to the first season of 2019. Furthermore, 91% (10) of men and 88% (37) of women felt that this experienced increase in production was positively influenced by their participation in the cooperative group. While fewer secondary household members surveyed experienced an increase in primary production (29%), of the few who did, 100% believed the increases were attributable to their spouses' participation in JP-RWEE activities.

Figure 4: Do you feel the increase in production was positively influenced by your / your spouse participation in the cooperative group (including trainings, savings, loan access and/or farm inputs)? (%)



\* Figure data includes all sampled group members (n= 133) and sampled household members (n= 98) across current districts, (group member: female= 109, male= 24 ; household member: female= 21 , male= 77).

### Livestock Production

FGD participants also indicated that participation in JP-RWEE had specifically increased the number of owned poultry, goats and pigs – which had subsequently improved their household diets and access to manure for use as fertilizer. A target of 754 households with small livestock was established in 2016 and exceeded by 2017, with 1,374 households with livestock. No additional livestock were provided in 2018 and 2019; however, beneficiaries reported on the sustained benefits of distributed livestock on agricultural and livestock production.

FGD participants spoke prominently of the opportunity to turn a small number of animals into a larger stock, and were eminently focused upon this activity – and therefore responsive to agricultural practices that helped them achieve it. One such participant explained: “[w]e acquired domestic animals like pigs and hens, and we are taking care of them with the aim of increasing their numbers and even benefit from their organic manure.” Other FGD participants, who had not initially received livestock, realized the financial and livelihoods benefits of owning small livestock, and improved care for livestock, through trainings: “I bought a pig and I expect it to give me another six, and I will continue to expand more in number through looking after them with the help of skills I fetched from the programme.”

Behavioral changes and improvement in animal rearing practices have knock-on effects to other elements of agricultural production: for example, use of manure from livestock increases beneficiaries’ vegetable yields. Increasingly amongst FGD participants, small livestock such as goats and pigs are kept with the intention of using their manure as organic fertilizers. One participant explains: “goats helped in providing manure, and some we sold to acquire other domestic animals, which acted as the basis of our income.” Similarly, another FGD participant explained “[f]rom 2 goats I received and hens I sold them, I bought 2 pigs that give me organic manure that I mix with chemical fertilizer in fertilizing my garden which improved my harvest from 10kg to 65kg of beans.” Another FGD participant from Nyaruguru said, “I bought a pig which gives me manure that increased my harvest from 150 kg of beans to 700kg, which [has] improved my wealth.”

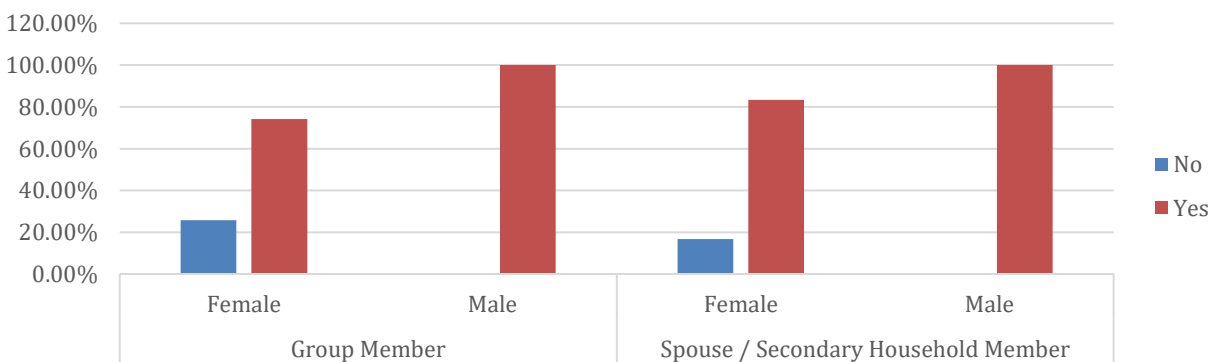
Access to credit and capital (reinvested profits/savings) were also a prominent driver of poultry and

livestock ownership, as one FGD participant from Kamonyi Kopaboki explains: “[w]e have goats that we bought from the profits of poultry farming.” Another FGD participant provided a similar narrative, explaining the benefits of growing her stock to provide for her family: “I started with one hen provided by RWEE [programme] and now I have 3 hens with 8 chickens. I sell eggs to satisfy some of my needs or my children’s needs.” A male FGD participant from Musanze explained “[f]rom the compensation I got from trainings, I purchased 9 hens, bought 3 more and now I have 15 hens... it provides me with eggs that I sell to gain money that helps me to afford my personal needs and my children.”

Participants also indicated their openness to adjust previous livestock and animal practices to increase agricultural production; one participant indicated “[w]e changed poultry farming into goat farming that gives us manure to use in our gardens.” Other participants point more to the potential of reinvesting profits made through quick-turnaround poultry sales: “I started with poultry activities and now I own 6 goats through learning how to save and invest in extra opportunities that can lead you to financial independence.”

With regards to livestock supports, fewer sampled group members (30%) experienced an increase in livestock production in contrast to agricultural production; however, livestock rearing was primarily a focus in earlier intervention stages (2015-16). The survey respondents experiencing an increase felt that their livestock production had been positively influenced by their participation (or their spouse’s participation) in the cooperative group. As Figure 5 illustrates, 74% (31/39) of participating women and 100% (8/8) of participating men attributed their experienced increases in livestock production to participation in the cooperative groups – including the trainings, savings supports, loan access and farm inputs.

Figure 5: Do you feel the increase in livestock production was positively influenced by your / your spouse participation in the cooperative group (including trainings, savings, loan access and/or farm inputs)



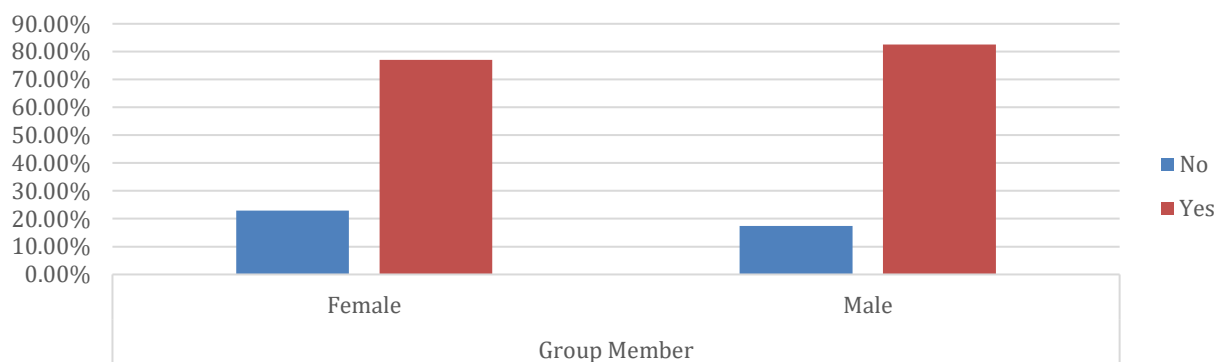
\* Figure data includes all sampled group members (n= 133) and sampled household members (n= 98) across current districts, (group member: female= 109, male= 24 ; household member: female= 21 , male= 77).

### Nutrition & Diet

Overall, there is evidence to suggest that JP-RWEE has improved the food consumption patterns, diet, and nutrition of beneficiaries by increasing nutrition awareness, and providing poultry and trainings on kitchen gardens. At baseline, there were 167 households with kitchen gardens in targeted areas, with a

target of 1574 households with kitchen gardens by 2020. Based on aggregated data in annual reports from 2015 to 2018, the target has been achieved with approximately 1,578 women<sup>67</sup> supported to establish kitchen gardens, mostly through the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach developed by FAO. Trainings covered topics such as nutrition, mulching to support year-long production, and various kitchen garden structures, including kitchen gardens in terraces, sunken beds, and container gardens made from local materials. The monitoring data on established kitchen gardens aligns with reports within the survey. As Figure 6 illustrates, 77% of participating members (84 female and 19 male) indicated they currently have a kitchen garden at their household as a result of their participation in the RWEE activities; this represents approximately 1,604 members overall if applied to the 2,083 members. Nutritional outcomes were also supported through the distribution of bio-fortified beans and fruit trees: since 2014, over 15,000 kilograms of bio-fortified beans and 10,875 fruit seedlings, including tomato, banana, papaya, mango and avocado seedlings, were distributed to beneficiaries.

Figure 6: Do you have a kitchen garden at your household as a result of JP-RWEE trainings?



\* Figure data includes all sampled group members across current districts (Kirehe, Ngoma, Nyaruguru), n=133, (female = 109, male = 24).

Kitchen gardens were found to be a primary driver of improvements in the diversity and nutritional benefits of beneficiary diets in target areas. Specifically, it is in the kitchen garden that the household can grow a diverse range of nutrition rich vegetables and fruits, which subsequently increase dietary diversity. Previously, the women in target areas used basic ingredients and food groups for their recipes, but after participating in JP-RWEE activities, there has been an increase in the variety of food used for daily meals. For example, a FGD participant from Musanze said “[t]rainings on agriculture helped me to diversify my agriculture products: now I have potatoes, garlic, onions and mushrooms [and I cook with these items].” Rural women in target areas have been provided with information and knowledge on types of vegetables, including those that can be cultivated throughout the year to improve their daily diets. Another respondent similarly explained: “[t]rainings on nutrition improved our nutrition practices,

<sup>67</sup> Data presented in the annual report narratives and associated indicator-based performance assessments are not clear on the sources and aggregation of data. Based on what is presented, it appears 125 women were supported to establish kitchen gardens in 2018, 125 in 2017, 345 in 2016, and 974 in 2015; however, it was reported in 2017 that 1004 kitchen gardens were established.



we know the importance of eating vegetables, fruits and protein-rich foods which are improving our health...[k]itchen gardens improved our diet, we know how to prepare vegetables, fruits and consuming foods rich in proteins.”

Beneficiaries interviewed in FGDs also felt that as a result of their use of kitchen gardens, their overall expenditure on vegetables fell – as one such participant explains, “[k]itchen garden improved our nutrition practices and reduced the cost that we would be spending on vegetables.” Similarly, another FGD respondent said “[n]utrition training changed our nutrition perception, like before I used to think that it is enough to eat ugali and beans, now we have changed; we eat vegetables and fruits, we created kitchen garden to reduce money spent on vegetables and the community is copying from us. Which is a great activity that benefits all.”

Improved awareness and practices among women within Rwandan rural households also had a direct positive effect on the nutrition and diet of their family members, particularly their children who subsequently have access to a nutritionally balanced diet. For example, a respondent said “I improved my nutrition practices where I started feeding my kids vegetables, fruits, eggs and other food rich in vitamins, proteins, and carbohydrates.” FGDs revealed the extent to which beneficiaries in target areas had basic (or limited) knowledge about nutrition and nutritious foods before the programme. As an example, one FGD participant from Nyaruguru said:

“Trainings on nutrition drastically changed my family’s diet and nutrition practices, I didn’t know the importance of eating vegetables and fruits plus protein foods [before participating in the programme]. Now we know the importance of vegetables, fruits and milk for our children, and it also applies to us as parents. We know to prepare food that is rich in proteins, carbohydrates, and vitamins which increased our energy and our children are growing up very well.”

FGD participants in Ngoma were particularly likely to feel that the adoption of kitchen gardens had reduced malnutrition among local children: “[t]rainings on nutrition changed our practices, we created kitchen gardens where we plant vegetables, now we prepare vegetables for our children and feed our children food rich in proteins, carbohydrates and vitamins. We also do sensitization of nutrition in the community and most people are practicing it too, this has reduced the number of children with malnutrition.” Another participant echoed this sentiment, explaining how improved practices have also extended to the community: “[t]rainings on nutrition improved our diet, now we know the importance of preparing and eating vegetables, fruits, and having at least 2 meals per day which we are teaching to the community.”

Aside from imparting information about balanced diets and the nutritional content of different foods consumed, beneficiaries were also trained in improving hygiene practices when preparing or dealing with food hence reducing the likelihood of diseases that spread as a result of unhygienic practices. For example, a respondent said “we improved our hygiene practices in our homes like washing hands after using the toilet, cleaning dishes with nice water, cleaning up places and washing our clothes.”

While beneficiaries reported more diverse diets, the foods consumed on a daily basis still remain quite

minimal in comparison to national scores measured through the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS)<sup>68</sup> at baseline (see Table 6). In 2015, households in the Southern and Eastern Provinces (the location of current intervention areas of Nyaruguru, Ngoma and Kirehe) were consuming an average of five (5) and six (6) different food groups, respectively (42% and 50% of possible food categories at the household level).<sup>69</sup> In 2018, the HDDS for Southern and Eastern Provinces remained largely the same, increasing to 5.5 in the South and decreasing to 5.7 in the East.<sup>70</sup> Using the same scale amongst sampled beneficiaries, though calculated at the individual level, men and women were both eating an average of three (3) different food groups per day (approximately 33% of possible food categories at the individual level). Frequency of meals also does not reflect change from baseline; Currently, 61% of female members are consuming at least two meals per day.

Table 6: Progress Towards Outcome Indicator 1.2 – Food Consumption Patterns

Indicator	Baseline (2013)	Target (2020)	Current (2019)
<b>Households' food consumption pattern (Dietary Diversity) disaggregated by meals per day and food composition (% change over baseline)</b>	Consumption Score Southern & Eastern Province 5 & 6, respectively <sup>71</sup>  61% have 2 meals per day	Consumption Score of 8  75% with 2 meals	Consumption Score Southern (Nyaruguru) & Eastern Provinces (Ngoma & Kirehe) is 3 <sup>72</sup>  Primary food groups: starches, dark green leafy vegetables, legumes/nuts  53% of all respondents have 2+ meals/day  61% of women, 47% of men consuming 2+ meals/day

Since the HDDS is not available amongst beneficiaries at baseline, it is not feasible to state that dietary diversity has decreased in relation to JP-RWEE, especially since qualitative data indicates that participants have changed their consumption patterns as a result of access to new seedlings, establishment of kitchen gardens, and increased and diversified production of crops and livestock. However, it is important to note that the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) does show a lower HDDS for more food insecure households (3), which was also seen amongst sampled beneficiaries (see 'Impact' for further discussion). Further to this point, sampled respondents

<sup>68</sup> Kennedy, Gina, et. al. "Guidelines for Measuring Household and Individual Dietary Diversity." *Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations* (2013).

<sup>69</sup> Dietary diversity is calculated through the recounting of foods consumed by each individual or household the day before the survey, providing an indication on access to food and available resources to obtain food, rather than the nutritional value of the food items consumed. The maximum number of food groups that could be consumed is nine (9) using the Women's Dietary Diversity Scale (WDDS) or twelve (12) using the Household Dietary Diversity Scale (HDDS).

<sup>70</sup> Paridaens, A. "Rwanda: Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA)." MINAGRI, NISR, WFP, UNICEF, EU, USAID (2018).

<sup>71</sup> Hjelm, L. "Rwanda: Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA)." MINAGRI, NISR, WFP (2015).

<sup>72</sup> The 2019 Household Survey calculated individual consumption, therefore using the Women's Dietary Diversity Score (WDDS).

identifying as 'divorced' or 'female adult only' households registered lower scores, at 1.8 and 2.8, respectively; as well as women earning less average monthly revenue.<sup>73</sup> As such, the survey data collected reflects the recruitment strategy in Rwanda: JP-RWEE is serving the most vulnerable and the focus on increased production and improved nutrition remains relevant and critical to the population.

## Outcome 2. Rural women have increased income to secure their livelihoods

Participants in the FGDs generally attributed their skills-acquisition with increased yields, and therefore income. One FGD participant from a Kirehe FGD said that she feels: “[i]ncreased income was due to the improved agriculture methods” she had learned through her participation in the programme. Increased income was further facilitated by access to savings and loans, entrepreneurship trainings, and access to new markets.

In the 2019 household survey sample, 71% (94: 77 female and 17 male) members reported benefiting from group economic activities, including training on entrepreneurship and financial management. Based on aggregated data from the annual report narratives, approximately 717 members (384 female, 333 male) received training on entrepreneurship and financial management since 2014, addressing topics such as bookkeeping, capitalization, and business planning. When combined with the trainings provided through the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), women began setting goals for production and income and monitoring finances well in order to improve household livelihoods. For example, one respondent in Kirehe District stated: “Trainings on financial management helped me to use available resources in a good way. I have now reduced the money I spend on unnecessary goods and instead invest the money in assets.” Another male member in Musanze highlighted how his planning and investments helped his family: “[f]rom the compensation I got from trainings, I bought 9 hens, bought 3 more and now I have 15 hens, which provides me with eggs that I sell to gain money that helps me to afford my personal needs and needs of my children.” Whether experiencing an increase in income, or not, households are demonstrating increased understanding of financial planning and management and investing in resources which have the potential to generate returns for the household.

Capacity building through trainings on financial literacy, savings and loan management, and savings group record-keeping and by-laws, as well as the formation of savings groups through the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) model, have also provided an additional source of income for households to be re-invested in household needs and businesses. Within the ten (10) larger cooperatives/groups, 50 VSL sub-groups have been established (1,149 members, including 909 females and 240 males) and accumulated a savings amount of RWF 27,345,700 (USD \$30,384)<sup>74</sup> in 2018, an average of RWF 23,799 (USD \$26).<sup>75</sup> By July 2019, sampled group members (133) had reported already

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<sup>73</sup> Women earning under 100,000 RWF had an average dietary diversity score of 3, compared to women earning over 100,000 who had a score closer to 5.

<sup>74</sup> Exchange rate of 900 RWF to 1 USD applied for all monetary values, based on average exchange rates in July and August 2019 from National Bank of Rwanda

<sup>75</sup> The 2018 Annual Report also mentioned 1,163 members with a managed savings amount of RWF 30,818,500 (USD \$34,243) during the same period. While the sums are not significantly different, it is important to cross-check in order to ensure accuracy and consistency in reporting on metrics. Furthermore, while trainings and access to finance was facilitated prior to 2018, the number of savings groups formed and amount held in savings is less clear, though it is estimated that approximately 24 savings groups were formed in 2015.

saving a total of RWF 6,023,050 (USD \$6,692), or RWF 46,331 (USD \$51) per member on average, a 95% increase from last year. Linked with trainings on financial management and household planning, members reporting using savings to support their livelihoods: “Through our group savings, I am able to gather money to pay for medical insurance, which I used to struggle with before.”<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, updates provided through KIIs reveals that 47% (807) of women have their own formal savings accounts,<sup>77</sup> an unintended outcome of JP-RWEE.

Furthermore, sub-groups have been connected to financial institutions, such as Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOS), increasing women’s access to bank loans from 26.7% before 2018 to 35.4% in December 2018.<sup>78</sup> This aligns with survey data, in which 37% (41) of female members sampled reported “being able to take a loan or borrow cash/in-kind” from a formal lender, like a bank or financial institution, and 45% (50) felt able to borrow from micro-finance institutions (MFIs) and SACCOS; however, only 7% reported to have actually borrowed from formal lenders in the past 12 months, and 48% borrowed from MFIs or SACCOS. Through facilitating connections, increasing women’s awareness and improving savings practices, women have become more confident in borrowing from formal lenders: “Due to my participation in savings and lending groups, I acquired small loans and managed to pay them back, which took away the fear of taking risks and I later acquired a loan from a bank that I am currently paying off.”<sup>79</sup>

A greater number of members (77%; 103/133, 86 female and 17 male) accessed loans specifically through their savings sub-groups, with sampled respondents taking out an average of RWF 21,806 (USD \$24). The loans accessed through VSL groups have also helped women to overcome unexpected financial shocks: “Savings and lending practices helps us to gather money for investment or personal use. When a member is faced with an unexpected situation that needs money, they can get it within time from our savings and pay later.”<sup>80</sup> Another member from Kirehe noted the importance of the VSL groups and their motivation to sustain them: “savings and lending groups will be sustained because it plays a big role in solving household problems that might happen when you’re not prepared.” Amongst sampled respondents receiving loans from groups (103), 50% spent loans on essential needs, including food items, health and health insurance, and school fees.

As previously mentioned, access to savings and credit were also prominent drivers of poultry and livestock ownership and small business activities, resulting in improved revenues/income for households and cooperative groups. Amongst sampled respondents receiving loans from VSL groups (103), 10% spent the loans on livestock, 12% on agricultural inputs, 2% on increasing farmland, and 17% on other business investments. Terimberere Cooperative in Eastern Province provides an example of reinvested profits: In 2015, the cooperative saved RWF 3,384,794 (USD \$3,761) from savings contributions and sale of produce and invested the money in goats for each cooperative member and a shared motorcycle to transport goods to markets.<sup>81</sup> In 2016, 400 women heads of household received 1,600 hens, whose eggs

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<sup>76</sup> FGD, Nyaruguru Cooperative.

<sup>77</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>78</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “2018 Annual Report: Rwanda.” *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2018).

<sup>79</sup> FGD, Kirehe Cooperative.

<sup>80</sup> FGD, Kamonyi Cooperative.

<sup>81</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “2018 Annual Report: Rwanda.” *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2018).

generated USD \$1,815 for these women.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, value-chain training and support activities, as well as access to post-harvest handling and storage equipment and food processing units, also bolstered economic activity amongst beneficiaries. In the 2019 household sample, 96 (72%) members (15 male and 81 female) benefited from value-chain training and support activities, including trainings on agro-processing, representing approximately 1,500 members served from 2017-2019.<sup>83</sup> These numbers generated through the sample align with and include the 1,496 female members who were accessing innovative food processing units for maize, sorghum and cassava,<sup>84</sup> such as milling machines, moisture meters, and solar bubble dryers, and 234 women from cooperative groups with greenhouses who were provided training and equipment for processing tomatoes into jams and ketchup.<sup>85</sup>

Such trainings and equipment not only improve the quantity of harvest, but also the quality, supporting better access to high-value markets. For example, in season 2018A, Twitezimbere Cooperative in Nyaruguru was able to harvest 12 metric tons of maize and 3 metric tons of beans alone, and sold 5 metric tons of maize to Africa Improved Foods, a primary buyer through WFP's Farm to Market Alliance (FtMA) initiative, receiving 61,094,310 (USD \$ 1,215) in sales revenue.<sup>86</sup> Another cooperative, Kubinya, harvested 420 kilograms of tomatoes and sold them for RWF 786,440 (USD \$874); coupled with a savings of RWF 632,000 (USD \$702), the cooperative paid medical insurance for its 31 members. Amongst all four cooperatives accessing greenhouses in the current programme cycle (2017-19), a total of RWF 4,131,900 (USD \$4,591) in income was generated in 2018.<sup>87</sup> Cooperatives supported between 2014 and 2016 in Kayonza and Musanze also recall the benefits of entrepreneurship and value-chain trainings: "we secured a market to supply tomatoes to a supermarket, and this increased the price from RWF 300 per kilogram to RWF 700 per kilogram due to our high quality standards."<sup>88</sup> Profits were invested in health insurance and school fees.

The duration of storage for crops was also raised frequently amongst FGD participants as a benefit accruing to them from the training and materials; overall, 74% (82) of women and 61% (14) of men received hermetic bags and/or tarpaulins and training on post-harvest handling and storage (PHHS), representing approximately 1,268 women served from 2017-2019.<sup>89</sup> This is in line with data from the annual reports, which cite the distribution of PHHS equipment to 1,142 farmers (908 women and 234 men) in 2018 and the training of 12 IPs on the PHHS approach of WFP, resulting in 979 farmers trained on the subject (803 women, 176 men). One FGD participant pointed to the benefits of using hermetic bags – resulting in longer storage periods, which allowed farmers to sell crops at periods of higher price (and therefore value). In her words, "[h]ermetic storage bags that were provided help us in storing our

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<sup>82</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. "2016 Annual Report: Rwanda." *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2016).

<sup>83</sup> Per the methodology, all proportions derived from the survey data can be viewed with 95% confidence with an 10% margin of error.

<sup>84</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. "2018 Annual Report: Rwanda." *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2018).

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*; KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>87</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. "2018 Annual Report: Rwanda." *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2018).

<sup>88</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. "2015 Annual Report: Rwanda." *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2015).

<sup>89</sup> Per the methodology, all proportions derived from the survey data can be viewed with 95% confidence with an 10% margin of error.



harvests for a long period of time without being damaged by insects and pests, and it maintains the quality of our harvests which we can sell to gain money and satisfy our needs.”

By 2019, 48 women’s cooperative and groups had made agriculture production sales to markets (40 by 2016 and 8 by 2018), nearly achieving the target of 51 cooperatives. However, cooperatives still face constraints to more sustainable market access. Two cooperative groups (Abaticumugambi and Murama) had not made any sales in 2018 due to low production capacity,<sup>90</sup> and another group visited in Musanze referenced fluctuating sales to hotels due to their inability to meet demands with only one greenhouse. Cooperatives are further constrained by policies governing quality under the Rwanda Standards Board (RSB): RSB certification is required to sell processed goods to markets, which is offered for a price restrictive to groups.<sup>91</sup>

In addition, few individual members have translated their skills and experience gained through JP-RWEE into profitable business ventures. Overall, only 34% (45, 39 female & 6 male) of sampled group members participate in small agri-business and self-employment activities, representing approximately 708 members overall and aligning with the approximately 909 reported within the 2018 Annual Report (36% of the 2,500 target). The ‘business type’ reported by the 45 respondents was largely limited to the selling of harvests not otherwise consumed by the household (76%), processing of sorghum into beer (13%), buying and selling rice purchased from Tanzania or other products (20%) and/or selling products from livestock/poultry like eggs and milk. Beneficiaries’ limited literacy and entrepreneurial acumen were cited as broad limitations to the second outcome of ‘increased income’ warranting additional attention:

“If you want to empower women, you have to make sure they have access to land...and water, then they can have primary production and move into secondary production and business. While access to water and increased production have been addressed, there are bottlenecks [in the latter]...we also need to do well in the value addition component; [women] are processing maize to maize flour, but they can do more...to bring people out of extreme poverty...beneficiaries must provide value to the produce themselves...from my view, the knowledge is really missing. If you expose people to that knowledge [of value addition to staple products]...it should work. If they stay in primary production they will never get out of poverty.”<sup>92</sup>

Furthermore, the same respondent noted a need to diversify and integrate livestock, aquaculture and crop production, which is a focus within the JP-RWEE Theory of Change. However, data on loan use and business type suggests that group members are still primarily focused on meeting their households’ essential needs and have not yet been able to branch into more market-responsive and diversified income-generating activities (IGAs).

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<sup>90</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “2018 Annual Report: Rwanda.” *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2018).

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*; KII, Implementing Partner.

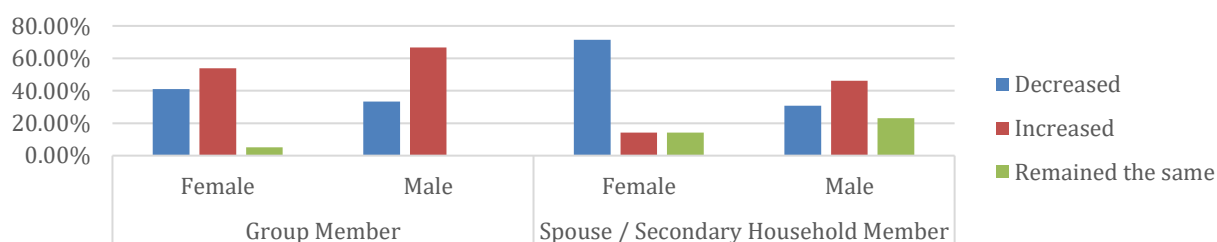
<sup>92</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

Table 7: Progress Towards Outcome Indicator 2.1 – Increased income

Indicator	Baseline (2013)	Target (2020)	Current (2019)
Variation of women/women's groups/women's cooperatives' income generated from their sales to WFP and other markets	39% <sup>93</sup>	50%	<p>34% (45) participate in small agri-business and self-employment activities (39 F &amp; 6 M)</p> <p>40% of the 45 with businesses had an average monthly revenue of RWF 10,000-50,000 over the last 12 months (USD \$11-55), 22% had 50,000 - 100,000 (\$55-111), 20% had 100,001-200,000 (\$111-222), and 16% had less than RWF 10,000</p> <p><b>56%</b> of these members felt their sales revenue increased over the previous 12 months; <b>51%</b> reported to have diversified business activities/revenue streams</p>

However, despite the few individuals participating in agri-business and self-employment activities, a substantial proportion of these sampled men and women felt experienced increases in their sales revenue over the last 12 months of business activities, as illustrated in Figure 7. Specifically, 54% of participating women and 67% of participating men indicated that their sales (or revenue from agricultural production, buy and sell, and processing activities) had increased over the previous 12 months. In addition, approximately half (51%) of those 45 participating in small agri-business activities reported diversified activities and revenue streams.

Figure 7: Over the last 12 months (2018-19), has your sales/revenue from business activity changed compared to 2017 - 2018?

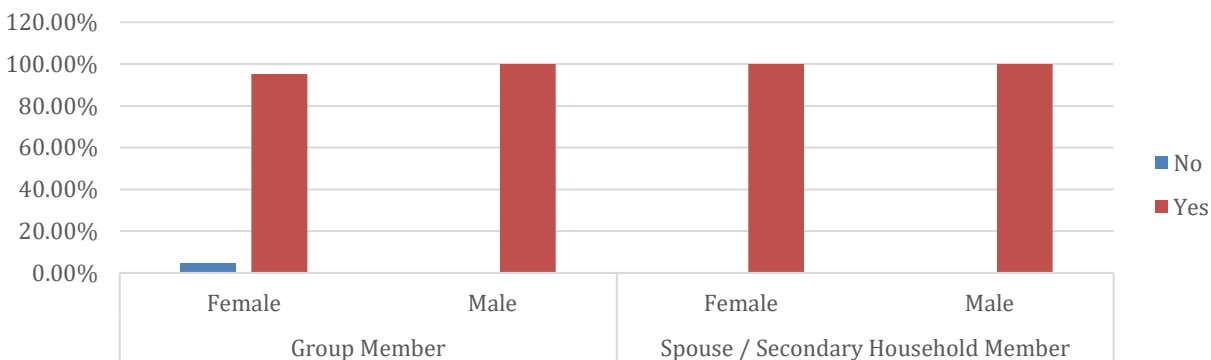


\* Figure data includes all sampled group members (n= 133) and sampled household members (n= 98) across current districts, (group member: female= 109, male= 24 ; household member: female= 21 , male= 77).

<sup>93</sup> As mentioned within the methodological limitations, the baseline provided is already a percentage change, and not an actual average income nor indication of number/type of revenue streams. Therefore, it is not possible to calculate a percentage change from baseline, instead farmers reported experiences of income increases, which is triangulated against reports of income changes in focused discussions. Further to this point, there were no clear assessments of income provided in annual reports: the 2016 annual report noted that tangible data on income would be collected in May 2017, however no aggregated or averaged data representative of the groups served were presented in the 2017 or 2018 reports.

Furthermore, sampled respondents felt that increases in income and profit experienced in the last year were positively attributed to their participation (or their spouse’s participation) in JP-RWEE. As Figure 8 illustrates, 95% of female members and 100% of male members felt that their participation in activities had influenced their experienced increases in profits, mostly through the sale of more, and more diverse, agriculture produce. When asked which skills learned through cooperative group trainings were applied in IGAs, most had mentioned improved farming practices previously detailed (e.g. improved seeds, fertilizers, storage).

Figure 8: Do you feel the increase in profit has been positively influenced by your/your spouse participation in the cooperative group (including trainings, agricultural inputs, savings, loan access, and other support)?



\* Figure data includes all sampled group members (n= 133) and sampled household members (n= 98) across current districts, (group member: female= 109, male= 24 ; household member: female= 21 , male= 77).

Qualitative data from focused discussions also reveals that some members started small businesses as result of received trainings: “Trainings on starting up businesses helped me to start my own small shop in the neighborhood, and there is visibility of expansion.”<sup>94</sup> Another focus group respondent in Ngoma noted a change in business activities after applying the skills learned: “we were trained on how to start up new businesses after analyzing if the business will succeed by doing a competitor analysis, market feasibility assessment, and providing the products that customers need. For example, I had a machine that processed flour, and I spent a lot of money in repairing and maintenance, and so I decided to sell it and now I have a shop.” The above-mentioned quotes and data suggest that while the numbers are still small, even fewer were engaging in IGAs prior to JP-RWEE, further highlighting the vulnerability of beneficiaries served.

<sup>94</sup> FGD, Ngoma Cooperative.

Table 8: Progress Towards Outcome Indicator 2.2 – Financial independence

Indicator	Baseline (2013)	Target (2020)	Current (2019)
<b>Proportion of rural women in targeted areas with financial independence over their agriculture production incomes (income domain of WEAI)</b>	31%	62%	100% of rural women in targeted areas with achieved 'Adequacy' for financial independence as measured by the Income Domain of A-WEAI

Furthermore, despite the amount of income generated, women have greater access to and control over agriculture production incomes, with 100% reaching the 'adequacy' threshold within the income domain of the A-WEAI (further explanation provided within 'Impact'). Women in target areas feel more able use their earnings to pay for insurance, buy clothes and shoes for their children, and invest in small businesses. For example, as a FGD participant from Kamonyi explains, "I can afford to pay for medical insurance for my family because of participating in savings and lending groups in the cooperative." Asked to extrapolate the underlying drivers of an increase in her experienced financial independence, another FGD participant attributed it to skills relating to saving and reinvesting profits: "I started with poultry activities and now I own 6 goats. Learning how to save and invest in extra opportunities can lead you to financial independence."



WFP 2019, GALS Champion describing a tool used for household planning

GALS trainings also created a space for household decision-making, increasing female involvement. One FGD respondent from Kamonyi explained: "I learnt to consult my daughter of 22 years of age, and it created a very good relationship. We didn't understand the benefit of...taking collective decisions regarding the use of family resources. This is serving as a foundation for my development, because she is supporting me and encouraging me." Another male member in Musanze noted a change in his spending



habits, considering the greater good of household when making decisions: “I used to spend money on alcohol and other unnecessary spending instead of using it for the things that can benefit my family, like buying a cow that can provide milk for my family, or buying meat that we can share at home. These trainings changed my mindset and I started consulting and sharing with my family.”

Other women found self-worth through their financial independence, as demonstrated within the quote below:

“Through GALS training I gained confidence and self-esteem. As a woman, I never believed in myself and I waited for my husband to provide everything for me and my children, but after attending these trainings I thought that I can do something to help my husband, myself and my kids. I started saving in my group, and later withdrew my savings. I confiscated a small plot of land and acquired a loan of 2.5 million and started a shop that fetches me income between 90,000 and 150,000 RWF. I am remaining with due of 590,000 RWF and I am sure I can manage to repay it. Since then, my husband is no longer struggling with everything at home.”

In addition to generating and managing their own personal income, others found financial independence within formal employment. In 2015 – 2016, 65 women were employed as security guards and accountants for greenhouses, or for cleaning and sorting cereals. One of these women participated in focused discussions, and described the impact: “I was employed in managing a greenhouse, and like I said, I had no job before. I used to sit home and wait for what my husband can bring home and later he even passed away and left me with all family responsibilities. So, participating in this programme helped me to get job and now I can pay school fees for my two children, buy them all school materials and then manage to feed them and myself.”<sup>95</sup> FDGs reveal that through some employment, increased farm incomes, and shared decision-making in the household, participating women in target areas are now able to pay for personal things and spend money according to their own choices, seeing their financial independence increase.

*Finding 6: JP-RWEE has not prioritized activities tied to women’s leadership and an improved policy environment, however has seen success in women’s advancement to leadership through the formalization of cooperative groups and increasing women’s sense of self-worth and confidence.*

### **Outcome 3. Rural women have enhanced leadership and participation in their communities and in rural institutions, and in shaping laws, policies and programmes**

Primary activities conducted under outcome three include the registration of cooperatives with the Rwanda Cooperative Agency (RCA), training on cooperative governance and inclusive policies, training of GALS champions, and opportunities to exercise public speaking and leadership skills in public forums.

Overall, 22 groups were supported to obtain legal cooperative status with RCA since 2014. In the first phase of JP-RWEE (2014 - 16), 13 cooperatives were established and nine (9) of the ten (10) existing

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<sup>95</sup> FGD, Musanze Cooperative.

groups have also obtained cooperative status in the second phase of implementation (2017-19). The registration process also included the provision of training to group members on cooperative management and principles of economics, conflict management, and gender policies and guidelines, with essential tools and guidelines also provided in manuals developed by UN Women and WFP. Local leaders in the three current districts of implementation also received training on cooperative governance, and groups were connected to village savings and loans agents and networks.<sup>96</sup>

Groups are putting into practice the knowledge obtained from cooperative governance trainings and the established guidelines: “the groups have their own internal constitutions, record keeping is strong, even if they have never been to school. Each group has kits, with passbooks where savings and loans are routinely recorded, they also have registers and stamps and operate transparently with accountability.”<sup>97</sup> In addition, all ten current groups have adopted gender policies and guidelines, such as women’s quotas for board membership; in 2018, 68% (54) of the cooperative board members were women and 32% (26) men.<sup>98</sup>

Based on the survey sample, few members have left cooperatives since they have been established, and most cooperatives operate in cohesion with few conflicts. Only one sampled member left from Abadahigwa Ba Gatore Cooperative in Kirehe as result of household conflicts with her husband, and the Kubinya Cooperative in Kirehe faced some challenges with the equitable sharing of leadership roles (see ‘Finding 2’ in Relevance). Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the 133 sampled members surveyed continue to attend group meetings on a weekly basis, and some have indicated the value of group membership in supporting their sense of self-worth and confidence: “I used to face the problem of harassment from my family, my husband’s family and society. I felt abandoned, but because of this programme, I met with my colleagues and have confidence to exchange ideas, plus working together keeps me busy with activities that will give me benefits. People started to recognize that I am worthy of living and of respect.”<sup>99</sup> Similarly, other members highlighted an increased acceptance and ability to participate in society: “working with the JP-RWEE group gave me the chance of being accepted in society again.”<sup>100</sup>

Increased self-esteem and self-confidence were cited as one of the main reasons behind increases in the application to (and participation in) community leadership positions. For example, a FGD participant from Ngoma explained, “I gained self-esteem and confidence which helped me to participate in leadership roles in this cooperative and community.” Another respondent from the same area explained “[t]rainings on leadership equipped us with leadership skills that helped me to lead this cooperative and gain a leadership position in this cooperative as Vice President.”

The scale-up of the GALS methodology through training of champions has also helped to increase the number of women serving as leaders within their communities. Since introduced in 2016, 16 staff from ten (10) IPs have been trained on GALS, training 160 GALS champions in 2016 (94 women, 66 men) and 119 champions in 2017 (73 women, 46 men) on standardized tools like the Vision Road Journey, Gender

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<sup>96</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>97</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>98</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “2018 Annual Report: Rwanda.” *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2018).

<sup>99</sup> FGD, Musanze Cooperative.

<sup>100</sup> FGD, Nyaruguru Cooperative.

Balance Tree, Empowerment Leadership Map, Diamond Dream, and Multilane Highway. Champions also participated in study tours to share challenges, lessons and stories of success across districts and develop a network for knowledge sharing.

Table 9: Progress Towards Outcome 3 Indicators – Leadership

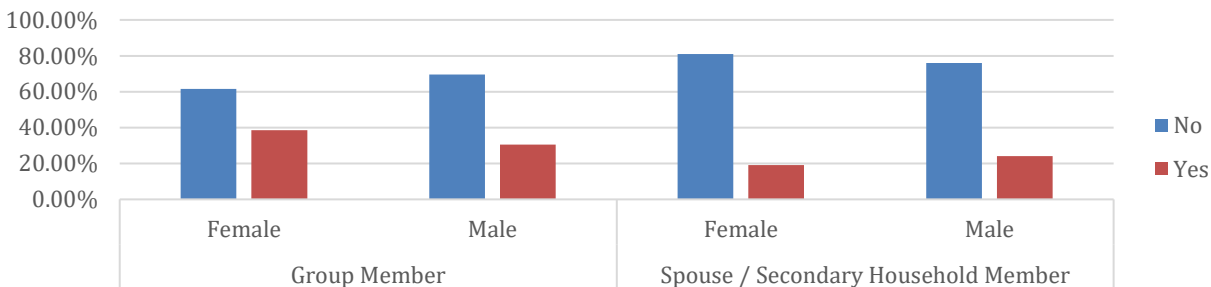
Indicator	Baseline (2013)	Target (2020)	Current (2019)
<b>Proportion rural women in various leadership roles</b>	43% all leadership 78% Producers	50% all leadership 85% Producers	Of the 43 female group members reporting presence of local government in community, 11 (26%) participate
<b>Rural councils</b>			Of the 100 female group members reporting presence of a producers group in community, 81 (81%) participate
<b>Producer orgs</b>			
<b>Land committees</b>			Of the 29 female group members reporting the presence of a forest users group in their community, 4 (14%) participate
<b>Active leadership roles</b>			42 (38%) of female group members hold or have run for a leadership position in their community (survey); 608 total women reported by IPs

Trainings on cooperative governance and leadership, and GALS trainings focused on creating self-awareness and a vision for the future, improved women’s self-confidence to access resources like loans, as previously mentioned, but also to participate in community discussions and compete for leadership roles. One member in Ngoma stated: “Trainings on leadership helped me to gain self-confidence and I started to compete for leadership positions, which I never thought of before attending these trainings.” One woman in Nyaruguru noted her tendency to prescribe to typical roles, and planning through GALS helped her to overcome her fear of acting different and speaking up: “Before attending JP-RWEE trainings about leadership and management, I was a housewife with a fear of taking risks and speaking up in public, but now I participate in cooperative meetings and activities. I gained self-confidence and esteem and taking risks with the aim of achieving success.” One male in Kamonyi stated that it was not usual for women in his district to take risks of speaking up and taking on leadership roles before GALS trainings, and some women have faced resistance from men. For example, a survey respondent who had recently obtained a leadership role in the community youth committee stated: “I am proud that I can perform well the responsibilities of the post, however my husband is not happy with it.”

However, despite some barriers stated, women are advancing into leadership roles. For example, as Figure 9 illustrates 39% of participating women and 30% of participating men held or ran for a leadership position in their communities over the last year, in comparison to only 19% and 24% of female and male spouses, respectively. FGDs generally revealed that participating women had increased participation in their communities and assumed leadership roles as a result of JP-RWEE. Of the 49 group members (42 female, 7 male) reporting leadership positions in the sample: 29% held community leadership roles, such as leadership of health and hygiene, security, youth, or parents clubs and committees; 20% were leaders at the cell or sector level for the National Women’s Council; 16% were

cooperative leaders; and 16% were village governance leaders. The remaining 18% were religious or political party leaders or were currently inactive in, or did not win, the leadership roles petitioned for.

Figure 9: Do you hold, or have you run for, a leadership position in your community? (%)



\* Figure data includes all sampled group members (n= 133) and sampled household members (n= 98) across current districts, (group member: female= 109, male= 24 ; household member: female= 21 , male= 77).

One woman from Kamonyi explained “[t]rainings on leadership helped me to participate in leadership roles in this cooperative and local authorities. I am the coordinator in this cooperative, and vice president in my village.” If not obtaining specific leadership roles, women were also more confident participating in cooperative groups, village governance and community committees: “Through leadership trainings I gained self-esteem and confidence to participate in group activities and provide ideas in community meetings.”<sup>101</sup> KIIs supported these narratives, with one key informant explaining: “the [u]nintended effects [of JP-RWEE [will]] include leadership. We are going to see the number of women leaders increasing and we are seeing that there are currently 608 women in leadership positions inside and outside of groups.”

#### Outcome 4. A more gender-responsive policy environment is secured for the economic empowerment of rural women

There was no activity directly implemented under the outcome on a gender-responsive policy environment until 2017<sup>102</sup>, when 80 women participated in a policy dialogue on gender in agriculture with 80 Members of Parliament, the Ministers of Finance and Agriculture, the Chief Gender Monitor from the GMO, and JP-RWEE Implementing Agencies present. Policy dialogues on the nexus between the agricultural policy and gender equality in Rwanda continued in 2018, ultimately contributing to the integration of a gender strategy into the Strategic Plan for the Transformation of Agriculture (PSTA4) in partnership with MINAGRI. In addition, 148 women have participated in national agri-shows since 2016, contributing their insights to national discussions on agricultural innovations and policies. Such activities bolstered their leadership skills, as mentioned, while also supporting progress towards a more gender-responsive policy environment in Rwanda. At the same time, such dialogues launched more national efforts to track the progress of rural women’s economic empowerment through the WEAI pilot to be undertaken by the government and external consultant team in 2019.

<sup>101</sup> FGD, Ngoma Cooperative.

<sup>102</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “2017 Annual Report: Rwanda.” *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2017).





**Alice Dusabe, President of Bahoneza Cooperative in Nyaruguru District**

With JP-RWEE, I participate in weekly meetings with my cooperative. I am also the cooperative president, so I participate in workshops and trainings with other leaders, helping to generate ideas and coordinate activities that can lead us to our own development. At the beginning of the programme, my mom didn't understand it well. I still live with her and I am responsible for all activities at home because she has backbone problems, so spending a day at meetings and attending workshops created some conflicts. But now, she even supports me because of the things I have achieved, like learning new skills, earning income, and buying assets.

JP-RWEE has really changed my life. I received leadership trainings through GALS, which helps in leading and coordinating the activities of this cooperative. I also started setting personal goals, which I evaluate every four months, and this helps me to assess my progress and achieve more. In the workshops and visits with other cooperatives, I learned about skills for running a successful agribusiness, like how to process quality maize flour and look for market opportunities in my village. Because of the trainings in agriculture and post-harvest handling and processing, I will increase my harvests into the future. Trainings on nutrition have also helped to improve my practices, like keeping a kitchen garden and preparing more nutritious and diverse foods, which improved my family's health.

Now I can satisfy my needs more than I ever have before. I can afford to buy clothes for my 7 year-old child and myself, I can afford to prepare nutritious dishes at home, and I even bought a new plot of land with my savings. I also make investments that generate additional income to sustain my livelihood; for example, I bought 1 pig and 13 chickens.

These seven months of participation have changed my life and my perception towards life. I gained self-confidence and self-esteem. Now I know I can chase after my dreams, and I can achieve whatever I set as a goal. This is really important to me, because it is giving me a chance of being accepted in society again. Young single mothers are not considered as people who can contribute anything to society. Now, I am contributing. I started creating awareness in the community about kitchen gardens and nutrition guidelines, now most people have kitchen gardens and are changing their mindset on nutrition. Our group is also sharing about modern agricultural practices, like mixing manure in fertilizers, and sharing our equipment for drying harvests, which is increasing production. The community is happy for us, and they also started to experience impact.

I hope we can extend the duration so that people can become more familiar and learn even more, like the preparation and planting of maize or other varieties of crops like beans and potatoes. I can really thank this programme, as it opened our eyes, and I promise we will continue practicing what we learned to maintain it.



## REVIEW CRITERIA 3: EFFICIENCY

*Q5. To what extent has the JP-RWEE made good use of its human, financial and technical resources to maximize efficiency of programme delivery?*

*Finding 7: The global JP-RWEE management structure has helped to hold Agencies accountable to deliverables and facilitate a more efficient system of delivery, however reduced budgets and discontinuity in funding timelines sometimes compromised a more coherent and planned response amongst Implementing Agencies and Partners on the ground.*

Collaboration and coordination are built into the programme strategy and objectives. Through the coalition of WFP, FAO, IFAD and UN Women, JP-RWEE is expected to “generate synergies that capitalize on each agency’s mandate, comparative advantage and institutional strength to generate more lasting and wider-scale improvements in the living conditions and rights of rural women and girls in the context of sustainable rural development.”<sup>103</sup> Programme funds are administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through its Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF), and an International Steering Committee (ISC) provides strategic vision and operational guidance on the allocation of funds to the Implementing Agencies. The ISC is chaired by a senior official of one of the Implementing Agencies on a rotational basis, and is provided Secretariat support by the JP-RWEE Global Coordinator who is charged with overall management of the global Joint Programme from Rome. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) also supports the International Advisory Committee to review annual project proposals and budgets and determine the national programmes’ eligibility for funding based on set criteria and performance expectations.

At the national-level, a National Steering Committee (SC), co-chaired by MINAGRI and the WFP Representative in Rwanda, oversees the allocation of funds to country activities, narrative and financial progress reports, and the overall country strategy and coordination. WFP, the lead agency in Rwanda, houses a JP-RWEE National Coordinator who coordinates activities and focal points across agencies and reports to the lead agency, SC, and TAC on progress. Furthermore, each Implementing Agency engages and oversees community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations and government entities as Implementing Partners (IPs) delivering programme activities.

While this management structure has proven useful to some extent, holding Agencies accountable to deliverables and providing strategic guidance and lessons from the global-level, delays and reduced funding to JP-RWEE in Rwanda resulted in some confusion amongst Implementing Agencies in Rwanda. After the initial national launch of the Joint Programme in 2013, \$245,482 was disbursed in late 2014 and distributed amongst the four Agencies; an additional \$1,288,256 was disbursed in early 2015. As one stakeholder interviewed reasoned: “[We] were planning for five million USD but only received like 500,000. It gets chaotic when things are downsized to this extent.” As such, activities were cut extensively and the ‘Theory of Change’ at the national-level was less clear; there were fewer cause-and-

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<sup>103</sup> JP-RWEE Global Coordination Unit. “Operational Guidance Note for the Participating UN Organizations” n.d.

effect links between what was being done in Rwanda and the expected outcomes defined in the global Performance Management Framework (PMF).<sup>104</sup> However, the geographical reach of the JP-RWEE had not commensurately downsized in line with funding; according to annual reports from 2014 and 2015, the programme operated in seven different districts and worked with 15 different cooperatives with over 12,000 members (5,762 women and 6,296 men). By the close of 2015, some Agencies had not delivered activities according to plan nor exhausted available funding, and therefore the funding proposal was declined in 2016. While no new funds were disbursed, activities continued with the outstanding balance. Furthermore, the absence of a National Coordinator made communication scarce and joint coordination minimal amongst Agencies; from 2014 to 2016, Agencies were operating in silos and the ‘jointness’ of programme was not seen.<sup>105</sup>

“Before 2017, it was the JP-RWEE but actual jointness was not seen in the field, even though on paper and in planning it was joint. Each agency had its own activities and IPs and the IPs didn’t know of each other. So, IPs could implement similar activities with the same group.”<sup>106</sup>

Renewed commitment from Representatives from UN Women, FAO, WFP and IFAD initiated a management response within the SC and TAC in 2016, halfway through the implementation timeline. The JP-RWEE Global Coordinator provided recommendations, which were integrated into the funding proposal for 2017, and an additional USD \$400,000 was disbursed and prompted the hiring of the National Coordinator. The geographical reach was also scaled down to three districts and the number of cooperatives limited to ten. As such, more coherence is experienced amongst cooperative groups who are receiving a more comprehensive ‘package’ of services across agencies under JP-RWEE, addressing a multitude of needs (see ‘Effectiveness’): “we work with the same beneficiaries, but with different activities, so one person gets more knowledge and technical support with this Joint Programme through complementary activities.”<sup>107</sup> Implementing Agencies interviewed see that downsizing the programme scale has not only improved the quality of outcomes, but also corrected inefficiencies in coordination: “there seems to be a good way of working together; when we were working in different areas and with different groups, it was not effective...and now it is coming together.”<sup>108</sup>

While the concentration of JP-RWEE activities in three districts enhanced joint implementation, it also increased the time burden of the programme on participating farmers. According to the 2017 Annual Report, having all implementing partners and four UN Agencies existing in all three programme districts increases the frequency of trainings, meetings and workshops, consuming more of women’s time, and therefore causing fatigue and “affecting their agriculture and other social economic activities’ time.”<sup>109</sup> In 2018, a no-cost extension was provided to implementing partners, however, cooperative groups and implementing partners still cite activity duplication and associated complaints from members on experienced ‘activity fatigue’.

For the most part, IPs have taken it upon themselves to coordinate at the district-level and avoid

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<sup>104</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>105</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>106</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>107</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>108</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>109</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “2017 Annual Report: Rwanda.” *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2017).

duplication: “At national level, the [activities are] clear but this didn’t trickle down, especially at the beneficiary level. And there is also confusion at the district-level. For example, an IP started a savings group, so when we came, [beneficiaries] were confused. But we took initiative and aligned amongst ourselves.”<sup>110</sup> IPs also coordinate to avoid activity fatigue: “We have to work together with other IPs in the district to avoid miscommunication while we target the same beneficiaries; you may call beneficiaries for a meeting the same day of other implementing partners.”<sup>111</sup> IPs see this form of coordination as reactive, and are seeking more guidance and coordination at the inter-Agency level.

Furthermore, the annual funding cycle affects the timeliness of delivery on activities and outputs amongst Agencies, creating a discontinuity or disruption to programming. For example, as an agency stakeholder explains: “[w]e get funding for 1-2 years and keep rolling [it] forward. With one year – or [effectively] nine months – it is difficult for continuity and we are uncertain if [an activity or budget line item] will continue as part of JP-RWEE.”<sup>112</sup> The funding cycle thereby interrupts the continuous operations of the programme, creating uncertainty that undermines the planning process.

Due to the short funding cycle, Agencies resort to re-contracting IPs each funding cycle. This skews the service provision offered by partners such that their implementation occurs over a shorter period (6 months) than they would otherwise prefer if the funding cycle were longer. The cycle can also create gaps in services provided to beneficiaries; specifically, the cycle can result in gaps between the previous phase and the ‘new’ phase – leaving beneficiaries in a given community ‘un-served’ during this time. One Agency interviewed captures this problem, explaining:

“for each year that [resources] come, we have to plan for that year. The funds are not much. The time between the previous phase and the new phase, we realized in the field there was a gap and the beneficiaries had not really evolved – but they were just left, and we saw that a few things lagged in that break. We can’t plan long-term, and when the funds come – implementation lags [behind]... [we] are constantly contracting and re-contracting implementing partners.”<sup>113</sup>

IFAD faces particular challenges in contracting and distributing funds in a timely manner due to its operating model, which is different than the other Implementing Agencies’ model. As both a UN Agency and International Financial Institution, IFAD’s business is typically the provision of loans to borrowing governments, and therefore does not directly implement activities through a Field Office with a Country Representative. As such, IFAD’s administrative procedures for managing direct programme delivery (namely, the recruitment and contracting of service providers and fund disbursement) must first be processed by its Headquarters in Rome, and are not geared towards field delivery.

IPs broadly agree, with one mirroring the view presented by the IA (above): “from the beginning of RWEE, [implementing partners] contracts are very short and you find that there are a lot of activities to be done – and you find that keeping sustainability is not going to be easy, because people have not got

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<sup>110</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>111</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>112</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>113</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

enough time [to implement]. It sometimes takes a long period of time to receive funds to implement.”<sup>114</sup> The annual funding cycle challenges the timeliness of programme delivery, as well as the potential sustainability of results, which will be explored in subsequent sections.

*Finding 8: The Joint Programme modality led to improved communication, coordination and information exchange within the United Nations in Rwanda, particularly in the planning phase, however Implementing Partners faced challenges integrating into this system and more coordinated information exchange is wanted in the implementation and reporting phases.*

Despite increased coherence across programming, evidence provided by stakeholders suggests a need for increased communication and collaboration amongst Implementing Agencies and Partners throughout implementation and reporting on activities. While frequent joint planning sessions take place amongst technical teams and focal points across agencies, the intensity in which Agencies work to continuously monitor the IPs in the field and the frequency in which the SC meets varies.<sup>115</sup>

“We need to have a more regular schedule for the steering committee, despite government involvement. We need to do a better job at this and hold them at least twice per year. Technical focal points at each agency meet regularly, increasing visibility, so doing ok there. And IPs meet with [Agencies] regularly but need more joint monitoring visits.”<sup>116</sup>

“It is sometimes difficult to find and coordinate with staff. For example, when there is a coordinator, sometimes people stop working deeply on documents and tend to leave to the coordinator. Also, planning the work in the field is a bit difficult, many implementing partners so there is fatigue for the beneficiaries.”<sup>117</sup>

This inconsistent communication primarily affects coordination across IPs, while also laboring the lead agency with additional responsibilities, like field data collection and follow-up on activities and output indicators. The National Coordinator role requires proactivity in order to ensure procedures are followed, buy-in is maintained across stakeholders, and quality data is available on indicator progress at the end of each implementation period. There have been some joint field visits, which have been cited as useful amongst IPs and IAs, however requests were made across IAs and IPs for more frequent joint monitoring visits.

As referenced within the previous quote, individual Implementing Agencies are also regularly meeting with their contracted IPs to assess progress and review reports and lessons, maintaining communication amongst their respective country representatives as well as their technical teams. In addition, at the beginning of each phase, IPs collaborate with their respective partner Agencies to identify and delineate distinct deliverables and selection processes and finalize a Terms of Reference for the contract period:

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<sup>114</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>115</sup> KII, Implementing Agency; KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>116</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>117</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.



“Our engagement starts before the beginning of each phase, where we sit down with [partner Agency] and other IPs and agree on that phase. We call it Terms of Reference (ToR), where we identify the activities to be done, and know who is going to implement it, and how selection is going to be done.”<sup>118</sup>

However, increased communication and collaboration is desired by stakeholders. First, IPs have requested and communicated a desire for more frequent and coordinated interactions amongst each other, facilitated at the national-level, in order to avoid duplication on activities, coordinate fewer and combined trainings to limit time-burden on beneficiaries, and increase knowledge sharing on best practices and lessons:

“IPs are still telling us they need more coordination amongst each other, because the IPs compete for visibility. They should have common planning and timelines, understanding each other’s schedules etc. to avoid duplication. Even content-wise for trainings, they need more synergies.”<sup>119</sup>

In addition, varying guidelines amongst Agencies for recruiting, managing and funding IPs increases the inefficiencies they experience. Some IPs experienced delays in communication and funding as a result of Agency policies and organizational structures. For example, if there are changes in activities and budgets, or a refund is needed as a result of completing activities, IPs are required to submit requests for approval from the Agency Focal Point or National Coordinator, who is not always immediately available or must follow guidelines for approvals from HQ and Country Representatives. Due to constraints in funding, most Agencies only have one employee dedicated to JP-RWEE, and when he/she is on leave or in the field on mission, IPs see delays in responsiveness:

“One negative issue is that they have very good employee rights policies. So, if the person is on leave, you must wait for him/her to approve your requests, which delays activities. And I don’t think information flows well amongst those agencies, which takes them time to agree on one thing, so we as implementers suffer under that miscommunication.”<sup>120</sup>

At the same time, IPs also have their own distinct operating procedures, and some Agencies experience delays from IPs on sharing of critical administrative information required for processing funds.<sup>121</sup>

Furthermore, due to the unpredictability of funds, Agencies have utilized consultant contracts for some focal points and the national coordinator roles, which has potential to affect programme continuity. As described by one Implementing Agency, annual contracts were perceived to limit consultants’ sense of job security and contribute to increased staff turnover, and subsequently lack of continuity in staffing and strategy. One stakeholder stated:

“One issue I see is that all the staff working on JP-RWEE tend to have short-term contracts at the agency level, and every time they have to re-apply for the position - maybe it jeopardizes their commitment and focus. They are all very short-term.... For continuity and sustainability,

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<sup>118</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>119</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>120</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>121</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

we need to have staff who are working more full-time. This is tied to the issues with inconsistent flows in the funding. You don't want people who are not sure of tomorrow."

While permanent staff at each Agency have bridged the gap in information as a result of staff turnover, the annual funding cycle and uncertainty of funds affects Agencies' ability to plan and provide greater job security with longer contracts for those who want it. This uncertainty resonates with IPs, as previously mentioned, as the short-term contracts applied for IPs was reported to affect their ability to plan for the efficient and timely delivery of activities.

*Finding 9: The Performance Management Framework defined at the global level has helped to define results areas, however monitoring efforts have been constrained by resources, including time, money, and human capacity, thereby limiting capacity to effectively collect, use and report on reliable data tied to programme activities.*

A Theory of Change and associated Performance Management Framework (PMF) was developed and launched at the JP-RWEE design phase defining the desired outputs and outcomes of the RWEE globally, which was intended to guide countries in the development of context-specific activities in partnership with Governments and other national stakeholders. Since a formal baseline was not conducted in Rwanda, baseline values were reconstructed using secondary resources in 2017. This presents a challenge to reporting reliably on programme progress, as it limits the extent to which cause-and-effect links can be drawn.

Furthermore, some of the outputs defined are written as higher-level results / impact and do not fully or clearly capture activities implemented by partnering Agencies. This was highlighted within the 'Review of the Performance Monitoring Framework (PMF) and Logical Framework and Collect Baseline Information For 10 Global Indicators' document, produced by the current National Coordinator in 2016, when reconstructing baseline values and proposing revised indicators and justification for use in Rwanda.

Specifically, not every output indicator is represented with a link to actual activities; Outcome 3 on 'enhanced leadership and participation in their communities and rural institutions' is not adequately represented by planned activities and associated outputs. This is likely because several of the output indicators are phrased as outcome indicators, and therefore not measured as a result more directly controlled by JP-RWEE activities. For example, enhanced confidence and leadership skills (output 3.1) is logically linked to enhanced leadership and participation (outcome 3), however 'confidence and leadership skills' is measured by girls' enrollment in secondary education and women's participation in rural elections, which are more like long-term outcomes in the context of activities implemented in Rwanda. There is therefore no clear indication of what is being done by Agencies and partners to enhance confidence and leadership skills through the output indicators, which include other potential confidence enhancing activities like trainings on leadership and cooperative management and peer-to-peer learning. As such, activities related to 'leadership' have not been prioritized or adequately captured

within reports. This ‘gap’ in services was linked to available funding: “we are struggling with the quality of results and the predictability of funding. Since we scaled [activities] down so much [in 2016], now there are gaps in our own programme theory. The gaps are mostly about leadership and standing up to speak, addressing nutrition, [gender-based violence], and power-sharing.”<sup>122</sup> Policy-level indicators under outcome four had also gone largely unmonitored until 2017, mostly due to an absence of relevant activities.<sup>123</sup>

The ‘Review of the Performance Monitoring Framework and Logical Framework’ report detailed other gaps and recommendations to be addressed:

- (1) A working session is needed for programme technical partners to share findings on PMF gaps and agree on revised indicators, indicator definitions, and realistic targets;
- (2) Indicators are not assigned to IPs for tracking, therefore presenting a risk to ownership of, and accountability to, results;
- (3) Results presented by IPs were primarily activity-based and did not present quantifiable data at the outcome-level.

In 2017, the National Programme Coordinator was hired, serving as both the coordinator and M&E specialist detailed by the RWEE Programme Document to form the national-level reporting and accountability mechanism and address the above-mentioned gaps. Efforts have been made to streamline data collection procedures and increase ownership by Agencies and IPs on results since then, though progress has been incremental, and the recommendations made have not been fully addressed. Indicators and validation mechanisms are presented within the annual reports and funding proposals, but there are still some issues with the overall country-level M&E strategy, in particular, aligning indicators with activities and conducting actual follow-up with the target population.<sup>124</sup> While IPs are taking more ownership of results and tracking progress, according to the second recommendation detailed in the PMF review report, internal M&E capacity across organizations varies, as well as the extent of alignment of data collected with global indicators in the PMF. As such, quantifiable data at the outcome-level is still not being systematically tracked for JP-RWEE beneficiaries, primarily changes in production and income.

For example, IFAD’s IPs for the implementation of the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) have a specific set of monitoring tools and methodologies required within this standardized approach, including ‘Community Action Learning,’ ‘Change Catalyst Workshops,’ and the ‘Gender Justice Review’. GALS monitoring tools seek to assess changes in incomes, assets and decision-making amongst individuals and groups, however these are specifically designed for the purpose of ‘empowerment’ and are therefore less focused on the rigorous collection of quantitative data. Other IPs also described established tools and processes to collect data, for example, both IPs of UN Women conducted rapid assessments to evaluate ongoing needs and results; however, the tools were mostly derived internally within their organization, and therefore do not always fully align with PMF indicators and definitions. In addition, some staff responsible for data collection in IPs cited having never seen the overall global PMF.<sup>125</sup> This

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<sup>122</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>123</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>124</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>125</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

presents challenges with aggregation during the reporting period; for example, while several Agencies and associated IPs track changes in agricultural production, the means of collection and metrics of measurement are different, limiting the ability to aggregate data and demonstrate change. JP-RWEE Rwanda is seeking to overcome gaps in monitoring data through the support of this review as well as engagement in the piloting of the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) at the national-level in partnership with MINAGRI.

Due to the short funding cycles and subsequently shorter implementation periods, the data that is collected is limited and primarily used for the purpose of reporting and refinement of programme activities in the subsequent year, and not used for immediate management action and objective decision-making:

“I can say that the first involvement is when we are formulating or validating the terms of reference, the first idea was provided by [our partner Agency] and we provided our inputs and discussed about it with other IPs. At a certain point, I don’t see clearly the link to how the Terms of Reference addresses the needs of the programme. Sometimes we don’t know even the indicator that we are implementing, but we are consulted to provide our recommendations within reports, but because this is short project there’s no way you can fix changes and, in most cases, changes appear in the next phase.”<sup>126</sup>

In addition, decisions are largely limited to improving efficiency in implementation, as the monitoring data collected thus far is not well understood by IPs (as seen above) and is primarily process-level data: “Our monitoring is based on deliverables, we have a number of beneficiaries to reach, so we monitor only output.”<sup>127</sup> To the extent possible within ambitious timelines, IPs also bring key lessons to individual meetings with their partnering Agencies, which meet one to two times per quarter to assess progress.

Available data has also been used, to a limited extent, to highlight key results and mobilize additional resources. In 2019, the focus of monitoring and evaluation is shifting to focus on ‘best practices’ in order to inform a potential second phase of JP-RWEE globally. According to one Implementing Agency interviewed: “We are improving the M&E side and the stories we tell about what we do. [We don’t have] an information sharing strategy and products, so we weren’t telling a good story about what we were doing.”<sup>128</sup> Implementing Partners noted the same, highlighting the lack of a cohesive learning strategy, which limited stakeholder sharing on best practices both amongst themselves as IPs, as well as limiting their involvement globally through publications and participation in International Steering Committee meetings and other conferences. At the Agency-level, there are some best practices being documented: UN Women and WFP have collaborated to prepare a trainer’s manual on “Mainstreaming Gender within the Agricultural Value Chain in Rwanda”<sup>129</sup> in 2017, as well as a report on the gender dimensions of the Purchase for Progress Programme (P4P)<sup>130</sup> in 2013; WFP is also currently finalizing a

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<sup>126</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>127</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>128</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>129</sup> UN Women and World Food Programme. “Trainer’s Manual: Mainstreaming Gender within the Agricultural Value Chain in Rwanda.” *Kigali: UN Women* (2017).

<sup>130</sup> UN Women and World Food Programme. “Gender Dimensions in the Marketing Chain for the Purchase for Progress (P4P) Program in Bugesera, Kirehe and Nyagatare Districts.” *Kigali: WFP* (2013).

“Gender-based Value Chain Analysis for Beans in Rwanda.”<sup>131</sup>

*Finding 10: Over time, Implementing Agencies have worked to maximize strategic partnerships and leverage comparative strengths of different agencies, contributing to enhanced learning and synergies amongst Implementing Agencies and Partners.*

Despite challenges experienced due to unpredictable resources and constrained timelines, JP-RWEE Agencies have done well to adapt and utilize existing expertise to maximize contributions to programme objectives.

Agency	Value Addition
FAO	Farmer Field and Life School (FFLS) methodology, as well as distribution of livestock, fortified crops, fruit trees and farming tools, climate-resilient agriculture
IFAD	Gender Action Learning System (GALS) and kitchen gardens to reduce household poverty
WFP	Post-harvest handling and storage (PHHS) training and infrastructure, market access through Purchase for Progress (P4P), and increased food security through Food Assistance for Assets (FFA)
UN Women	Cooperative governance, training on leadership, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and advocacy and mainstreaming of women’s rights and gender equality

The four Agencies’ specialty programmes are interconnected and all contribute to the four JP-RWEE outcomes of women’s improved food and nutrition security, increased income and secure livelihoods, enhanced leadership and participation, and access to a gender-responsive policy environment. While key data is not always collected and shared on specific JP-RWEE PMF indicators, evidence and knowledge gained from implementing and studying the effects of Agencies’ global work in their respective areas contributed to enhanced learning and synergies amongst programme implementers. For example, Implementing Partners cited increased skills and understanding of best practices through their engagement with the JP:

“All four agencies have their specific activities, like UN Women specialize in gender equality, so we share that expertise, and they even come to the field to support us which adds a value to participation in this programme [as an IP]. Same with FAO or WFP, every agency provides different support: WFP helps in food security, FAO helps in climate resilience activities...they [help to create] synergies [when] implementing this [programme]. [FAO] provided us with different trainings like in FFLS for us to implement [the methodology] in the field.”<sup>132</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Mushumba, Desire. “Gender Based Value Chain Analysis for Beans in Rwanda.” Kigali: WFP (2019).

<sup>132</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.



Agencies have cited cross-Agency learning as well:

“for me, I didn’t know [about GALS], but I found it useful... even though in Rwanda we are somehow advanced in gender policies, a challenge is application of the policies at the household level. I have seen that GALS is a good tool [for] implementing those policies at the household level. It helps both genders to change the mentality on certain aspects of participation, and [households] start visioning and planning in a better way.”

Like Agencies, IPs also have their own comparative advantages; for example, CARE International co-chair the Gender Cluster in Rwanda and Oxfam, an IP in 2016, continues to generate evidence on best practices for sustaining and growing the impact of GALS. Bringing the organizations together has encouraged stakeholders to “challenge [their] thinking”<sup>133</sup> and deliver more sustainable results (see ‘Sustainability’).

Furthermore, the inter-agency alliance formed through the Joint Programme pushes forward the ‘Delivering as One UN’ agenda and capitalizes on the collective influencing power of the UN. This was seen as a tremendous advantage for IPs, helping to mobilize resources: “Some of the advantages of joint delivery is that we work with each other’s resources and comparative advantage. UN Women knows about rights, FAO, agriculture, etc. They put together funds, and in case funds from [one Agency] are not enough, when [Agencies] come together they have greater coverage.”<sup>134</sup> The advocacy and positioning of JP-RWEE into existing coordination mechanisms, primarily the UNDP II, will further support the sustainability of resources and outcomes, as JP-RWEE will now be eligible for other available UN funding.

Some IPs see the Joint Programme as a partnership and add their own resources: “It is not like being a contractor. If it is a certain activity, you may find like 70% of funds are from JP-RWEE and the other 30% of resources are from [the IP].”<sup>135</sup> However, the extent to which budget sharing occurs across IPs is not clear, as IPs also noted discrepancies between available budgets, affecting the quality of implementation across stakeholders and the IPs own visibility: “we have different resources; you might find one IP receiving \$100,000, while others receive \$20,000, so this differentiates how we treat our beneficiaries, which needs to be adjusted. If you allow one IP to give 5,000 RWF per diem, it must be the same for other IPs.”<sup>136</sup> While it is fitting to have varying budgets for IPs, depending on activities undertaken, alignment on per diems and other standard budget lines is seen as useful for increasing experienced coherence amongst IPs for beneficiaries.

Resource mobilization is occurring, though to a lesser extent than expected considering the relevance of JP-RWEE within Rwanda and globally, as well as the Partner Agencies’ comparative advantage and ability to leverage available funding. All Implementing Agencies have contributed funds: IFAD contributing USD \$227,275 from the Gender Desk and FAO, UN Women, and WFP contributing USD \$20,682, \$29,889 and \$15,000, respectively, from their Core Funding.<sup>137</sup> Implementing Agencies have also made in-kind contributions to JP-RWEE in the form of regular staff contributions, with FAO, UN Women and WFP

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<sup>133</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>134</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>135</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>136</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>137</sup> JP-RWEE Global Coordination. *Participating Agency Budget Contributions Assessment – 2013/18, JP-RWEE.*

contributing \$104,111, \$57,745, and \$178,774, respectively, in person hours.

The GoR has also made financial and in-kind contributions to the programme at both the national- and district-level, contributing USD \$312,727 to the WEAI National Pilot, 11.5 Ha of land worth USD \$39,137, and dedicated time to participate in JP-RWEE trainings at the district-level and SC meetings at the national-level. While most Agencies noted the importance of mobilizing resources nationally, Agencies also noted dwindling interest from Government in engaging fully as a result of the limited funds mobilized from external donors in the first few years; other JPs and Agency flagship programmes are working with larger multi-million dollar funds and a greater number of beneficiaries, therefore generating more interest and buy-in.<sup>138</sup> Some Agencies also noted the lack of a knowledge management and communications strategy as a constraint to resource mobilization – with inadequate data and a sweeping name highlighting women’s economic empowerment broadly but not the unique means of how empowerment will be achieved, Agencies find it difficult to pique interest in other donors.

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<sup>138</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

## REVIEW CRITERIA 4: SUSTAINABILITY

**Q6. What is the likelihood that the benefits from the JP-RWEE will be maintained for a reasonably long period of time after the project phase out?**

*Finding 11: Implementing Partners and Agencies have been thoughtful about sustainability, considering 'exit strategies' in the design and planning of each activity; however, contextual constraints and resource mobilization continue to present risks to the longevity of achieved results*

JP-RWEE, with funding from Sida and Norway scheduled to finalize in 2020, has integrated 'exit strategies' into programme operations throughout the past two years of their more coordinated and downsized response. Exit strategies have included: (1) integration of JP-RWEE cooperative groups into existing flagship programmes; (2) integration of the management and monitoring of JP-RWEE groups into existing national- and district-level structures; (3) focus on policy-level change under 'Outcome 4'.

### Integrate into existing programmes

At the agency-level, progress has been made towards integrating women's cooperative groups and more prominent gender components into existing programmes. For example, WFP included a strong recommendation and strategy for supporting smallholder farmers in Rwanda in their 2019 – 2023 Country Strategic Plan (CSP approved at EB.2/2018). Specifically, one strategic outcome focuses on smallholder farmers', especially women's' "increased marketable surplus and access to agricultural markets through efficient supply chains by 2030." Already, four out of the 19 cooperative groups supported under JP-RWEE since 2013 have been integrated into existing activities, some with great success, as part of the Rwanda FtMA: one cooperative sold 20 tons of maize to FtMA earning around USD \$5,000.<sup>139</sup> UN Women also highlighted efforts to incorporate JP-RWEE activities into their recently issued Strategic Note, primarily focusing on leadership and sociocultural norm changes on views of women in mixed cooperative groups. By incorporating into existing programmes, women's cooperatives benefit from increased opportunity to gain skills and funding: "IFC has a programme focused on gender and agriculture leadership, they have this objective, so let's work with our cooperatives and make links with other initiatives."<sup>140</sup>

Implementing partners are also integrating principles and activities learned from their participation in JP-RWEE into regular programming. For example, staff from IPs were trained on the GALS methodology by IFAD (both prior to and during JP-RWEE activities), and seeing the benefits for both beneficiaries and the organization alike, have integrated GALS principles into new activities:

"We have increased our reputation and profile in terms of being women-centered, and every project we are designing, we use our experience with GALS...we have integrated GALS into

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<sup>139</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>140</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

many of our projects. [It is like an] exit strategy but [mostly] a scaling strategy. Because we worked in [the district] since 2015, we have been surveying GALS champions that were formed in different periods to formulate a district platform that we can re-engage too, [ensuring that] changes in people’s mindset last [and] changes in the power balance in families lasts too.”<sup>141</sup>

GALS methodologies were recognized across stakeholders for being an innovative strategy for addressing extreme poverty by addressing unequal power relations and supporting households to plan for the future together. Since tools are open-source, GALS methodologies are now being utilized by other non-governmental organizations, including Heifer International. In addition, a Rwanda GALS Network was launched by Oxfam UK in 2017, organizing 15,000 GALS champions at different levels. While JP-RWEE did not initiate GALS in Rwanda (Oxfam Netherlands did), champions trained under this joint programme are incorporated into the larger nation-wide network, and positioned at the community-level as “opinion leaders [promoting] the women’s movement in Rwanda.”<sup>142</sup> In addition to integrating GALS methodologies and linking champions to wider networks, IPs have also started to connect the cooperative groups to other similar interventions not funded under JP-RWEE, extending trainings on poultry farming, savings, agroforestry and the preparation of nursery beds.

The integration of JP-RWEE with other similar programmes presents two challenges at the IP-level: (1) it has previously confused beneficiaries when collecting data and reporting on RWEE results; (2) the quality with which IPs implement programme components staff did not receive training on, such as cooperative and savings group management, has potential to dilute the quality of programming provided into the future. As such, Agencies highlighted the critical importance of their role and other IPs with specific expertise to continue to cross-fertilize, sharing ideas and building capacity of partnering community-based organizations and government institutions to sustain activities to standard.

### Work with local authorities

Some IPs have also begun to work with local authorities to integrate the monitoring and management of cooperative groups into existing sector- and district-level government structures. By promoting community ownership, IPs are not only supporting sustainability but also establishing a foundation for scalability. Primarily, the registration of cooperatives with Rwanda Cooperative Agency (RCA) ensures that cooperative activities are monitored and systems are in place for cooperatives to report and resolve management issues should they arise. By registering cooperative groups with RCA, the programme also ensures that groups are eligible for external business development grants and are recognized by governmental bodies that are able to give them further support and assistance. One stakeholder reflected this in their feedback, explaining:

“This programme helped groups of people to become cooperatives and acquire cooperative legal certificates, which indicates sustainability even when the [programme] can stop, they can keep their operations as a cooperative and not forget that they will be monitored and evaluated under Rwanda Cooperative Agency (RCA)...[T]hey will also benefit from the donations given by the government to cooperatives in Rwanda. We will provide guidance to

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<sup>141</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>142</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

those cooperatives, do monitoring and evaluation with the aim of helping them to sustain for a long period of time. Another thing is that we will help these cooperatives to find market for their products.”<sup>143</sup>

This quote illustrates that RWEE cooperative groups have been elevated to become cooperatives under the law, recognized as a legal entity, which provides for a sustainable path after project implementation has been completed. As legal entities, groups will not only supported by RCA, but also by local government officials, who are working to meet their own community development goals set within the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF). Cooperative members from earlier phases of implementation in Kamonyi also noted the continued support received from local authorities:

“Banana plantations were provided, as well as kitchen garden and goats. If we utilize them wisely we will sustain our development. And again, we are monitored and evaluated by different organizations, mainly local authorities, which helps us to sustain what we have already received from this programme. The programme stopped but we are still operating as a cooperative and we are using the skills and equipment from JP-RWEE. We receive help from the government and other services designed to benefit cooperatives.”<sup>144</sup>

As noted in the quote, cooperatives have continued to apply the knowledge received to sustain their development. However, not all cooperatives have been registered formally with RCA, and IPs noted a need to increase collaboration with local authorities in order to better support and legitimize the work they do in the community. Typically, IPs sign agreements with cooperatives sector authorities to formalize a joint action plan, which is integrated into the sector’s JADF performance contracts. Since the selection of groups was conducted at the Agency-level since 2017, IPs are not coordinating directly with local authorities on their agreements and implementation plans. Collaboration with JADF has occurred to a limited extent amongst Agencies, however, local authorities have expressed explicit interest in better incorporating RWEE methodologies, such as GALS, and outcomes on production, for example, into their performance contracts. In particular, local officials noted the utility of GALS and the desire to incorporate this methodology into performance contracts agreed to at the household-level.

With more coordination between IPs and local authorities, targets for implementation and desired outcomes can be set and integrated into household-, sector- and/or district-level performance contracts under JADF, further supporting the sustainability and reach of activities and accountability to outcomes.

### Re-focus on policy strengthening

Some agencies also stated a desire to slow-down the pace implementation, and take time to re-focus on the legacy and impact of JP-RWEE in Rwanda. In theory, at the global programme level, the JP-RWEE strategy was to link “macroeconomic policies with the performance of meso-level institutions in providing services, assets and inputs, and the impact on rural women’s livelihoods at the micro level”<sup>145</sup> in order to build a case for taking a holistic approach to women’s economic empowerment.

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<sup>143</sup> KII, Government Stakeholder.

<sup>144</sup> FGD, Kamonyi Cooperative.

<sup>145</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “RWEE Programme Document.” *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online*.



Furthermore, the programme was intended to “strengthen collaboration between ministries of agriculture and ministries of gender/women’s entities, both at the central and local levels.”<sup>146</sup>

However, progress towards, and monitoring of, outputs under the final outcome promoting a more gender responsive policy environment has been largely delayed and de-prioritized over the past five years. The focus has primarily been on the delivery of activities benefiting women at the individual and household levels, with some linkages made to national and local advocacy platforms, such as the Rwanda GALS Network and RCA, as mentioned previously. However, the low levels of involvement of district and national government officials during the first phase of the programme has been duly noted by Agencies, IPs, and the MINAGRI Gender Advisor during her 2017 field visit.<sup>147</sup> While district-level involvement has increased in the second phase (2017-19), more targeted and strategic efforts are required to re-generate interest and coordination on achieving sustainable policy change:

“We need a strategic vision and support to make sure this is not just another programme. So when we get money, we really need to take a moment to slow down, breath and think of the legacy. What do we want to leave behind, in terms of number of policies, etc? For example, our influence on the PSTA4, we need to continue this trend to ensure the gender policy in agriculture is aligned and monitored...and to analyze the land policy and how it is being implemented and to understand gaps.”<sup>148</sup>

As noted by this stakeholder, some significant contributions have been made to policy discussions and frameworks. For example, UN Women held a policy session within Parliament<sup>149</sup> and members of the JP-RWEE Technical Working Group provided inputs into the development of the Gender Strategy for the current PSTA4. Furthermore, technical working group members have also supported the conceptualization and launch of the WEAI in Rwanda, a key output under the global PMF. The main limitation of these efforts has been that they have been disjointed and are not part of a continuum of national advocacy activities and engagements: engagements are one-off and not monitored, and while the SC is co-chaired by the government, government representative attendance is infrequent.

### Challenges to sustainability at the individual-level

Some threats to implementation and sustainability have also been noted at the individual level within interviews and reports, primarily, asset management and literacy levels. Concerns have been expressed regarding the sustainability of some of the interventions focused on the distribution of assets, and primarily, greenhouses. For example, two of the greenhouses have been destroyed as a result of severe weather. While the JP-RWEE is supporting the repair of the greenhouses, Twitezimbere Kiyonza also contributed USD \$389 to cost-sharing. In order to mitigate issues of sustainability with greenhouses while contributing to increased practice of climate resilient agriculture and increased production, low-

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> UN Women, WFP, FAO, IFAD. “2017 Annual Report: Rwanda.” *Multi-Partner Trust Fund: Online* (December 2017).

<sup>148</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

<sup>149</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

cost irrigation systems will be provided in 2019 instead.<sup>150</sup> However, limited financial resources amongst most women and groups presents a risk to the sustainability of distributed resources. Furthermore, some cooperative members across districts had expectations for receiving irrigation systems, seeing the benefits for their peers, while specific criteria for distribution were not shared with groups to clarify eligibility, causing some dissatisfaction amongst members. As one cooperative member in Nyaruguru shared: “The main challenge we faced was that the water harvesting system was given to only 70 members out of 239, which created complaints amongst the people who did not understand why they didn’t have that chance.”

Furthermore, there have been some concerns about cooperative groups’ ability to sustain and practice key learning from JP-RWEE. Due to the selection criteria for the programme, targeting the rural poor with low-levels of education, Agencies and IPs have noted year-on-year within Annual Reports the limited capacity of women to identify business opportunities and practice financial literacy, as well as to understand complex trainings and use the associated manuals. Knowledge transfer is further exacerbated by women’s diverse needs and situations, as some women have severe illnesses or are single mothers, further restricting the time available to attend trainings as they frequently need to tend to medical needs and their children. These realities and unique needs places a cap on the number and type of women who are able to advance into leadership roles, limited by their ability to undertake specific tasks which require writing and numeracy. Furthermore, it places limits on the progress towards and sustainability of outcomes; without preliminary activities targeted at increasing all members’ understanding and use of key skills, including cooperative management, financial literacy, market intelligence, and business planning, the rural women served risk staying in primary production and not advancing into secondary production and business, a key outcome and step towards alleviating levels of poverty and vulnerability.<sup>151</sup>

Sustainability of outcomes, specifically increased production and consequently increased market access and incomes, is further exacerbated by cooperatives’ limited access to land. Focus group and survey participants across districts mentioned long-term constraints on land access. In Ngoma, one sampled survey respondent had noted that the cooperatives’ greenhouse had problems with its irrigation, yet the cooperative didn’t have sufficient funds to hire a technician to fix it. Furthermore, the cooperative did not have access to land to shift the location of its production activities: “[w]e do not have cooperative farming land to relocate our activities, but if we can get a farming plot for the cooperative, we can conduct long-lasting activities that show increased yields.” A focus group respondent in Kirehe also mentioned a lack of space for carrying out programme activities: “the first and foremost challenge is that we don’t have an office where we can work from, we don’t have a common garden as a cooperative, and we don’t have space for drying our harvest.” One cooperative member in Nyaruguru connected the limited available land to longer-term challenges related to the increased production currently experienced as a result of JP-RWEE support: “in the future, when we have a bigger market, we won’t be able to produce more due to limited land.” Such constraints place risks on cooperatives ability to maintain buyers if they cannot meet demand in the long-term.

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<sup>150</sup> KII, Implementing Partner.

<sup>151</sup> KII, Implementing Agency.

## REVIEW CRITERIA 5: IMPACT

**Q8. Is there potential measurable impact of the intervention on the target group across all dimensions of empowerment?**

*Finding 12: The proportion of those ‘undernourished’ have decreased in the target areas relative to secondary baseline data; however, the experience of food insecurity amongst beneficiaries is still quite high and associated with dietary diversity, providing insight into the food security experience of the most vulnerable served by JP-RWEE.*

JP-RWEE seeks to address women’s economic empowerment through an integrated approach addressing food insecurity and nourishment as well as access to resources for improved livelihoods, such as land. With regards to the percentage of undernourished population in the target areas (G.1 of *JP-RWEE Logic Framework*), this is calculated through summary of ‘severely’ and ‘moderately’ food insecure populations. It should be noted that this metric aligns with SDG Indicator (2.1.1) *Prevalence of undernourishment* and (2.1.2) *Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population*, based on the *Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)*.<sup>152</sup>

Based on secondary data, it was previously estimated that 37% of the beneficiary population were classified as undernourished,<sup>153</sup> with a target to reduce the proportion to 30%. As of 2018/2019 this has been achieved in across all sectors served, as is illustrated in Table 10.<sup>154</sup> However, there are still high levels of experienced food insecurity.<sup>155</sup> Ngoma is the least food insecure, according to the FIES measure, whereas Kirehe and Nyaruguru are similarly food insecure. Estimates of moderate and severe nourishment are also provided for reference.

*Table 10: Current Percentage of Undernourished (Secondary Data) and Food Insecure (Primary Data)*

	Classified as Undernourished %	Moderately Food Insecure %	Severely Food Insecure %
<b>Total</b>		<b>42.0%</b>	<b>31.0%</b>
Male		42.0%	32.0%
Female		39.0%	30.0%
<b>Nyaruguru</b>	<b>24.0%</b>	<b>42.0%</b>	<b>31.0%</b>
Kamonyi	24.0%		
Rubavu	22.0%		
Musanze	12.0%		
<b>Kirehe</b>	<b>23.0%</b>	<b>44.0%</b>	<b>28.0%</b>
<b>Ngoma</b>	<b>13.0%</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>26.0%</b>
Nyagatare	17.0%		

<sup>152</sup> Sustainable Development Rwanda. “Rwanda Data for Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.” *Online* (n.d.)

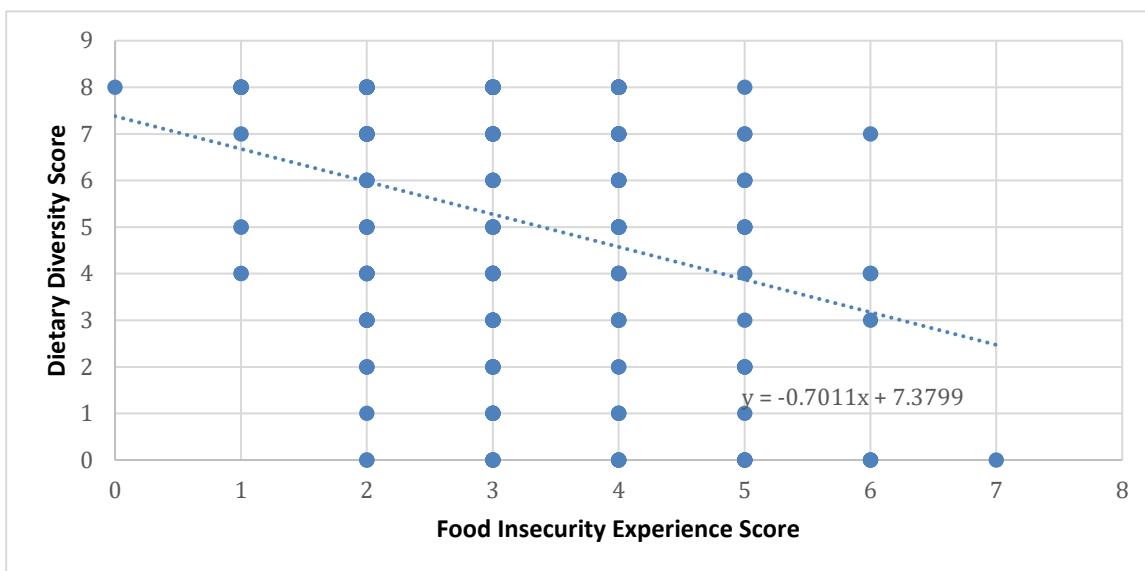
<sup>153</sup> Hjelm, L. “Rwanda: Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA).” MINAGRI, NISR, WFP (2015).

<sup>154</sup> Paridaens, A. “Rwanda: Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA).” MINAGRI, NISR, WFP, UNICEF, EU, USAID (2018).

<sup>155</sup> FIES Score Generated from 2019 Household Survey

Dietary diversity, which is still quite low for the majority of sampled respondents, is linked to the households' food security, with more food secure households consuming food items from a larger number of food groups.

Figure 10 Increased Dietary Diversity is Positively Associated with Lower Levels of Experience Food Insecurity



**Finding 13:** Based upon available data at baseline and midline, there does not seem to have been a substantial change in the proportion of participating women owning land either solely or jointly in the household that is attributable to JP-RWEE.

The JP-RWEE Logical Framework ensures that the percentage of rural women owning land out of agriculture landowners in targeted areas (disaggregated by individual ownership and jointly with men) is tracked against the baseline figures (G.2). At baseline, 11% of women owned land outright, whereas 81% reported to own land jointly with their spouses.<sup>156</sup> Equivalent report data is unavailable after 2015, therefore for the updated figures, 2019 Household Survey Data is used for comparison. It should be noted that this metric aligns with SDG Indicator (5.a.1a) *Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex*, (5.a.1b) *Share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure*, and (5.a.2) *Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control*.

Currently, 93 women (83 group members, 15 household members) reported that their household owned agricultural land. This proportion represents 74% of the female respondents overall;

<sup>156</sup> Mukahigiro, A. "Secure Women's Land Rights in Rwanda: Investigating its Impact on Food Security." *Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation of the University of Twente, Netherlands* (2015).

disaggregated, this represents 75% of group members and 71% of female household members who report owning land in their household. Of these women (with land owned by their household), 16% report owning this land outright (sole ownership); disaggregated, this represents 22% of female group members and 0% of female household members reporting sole ownership. In comparison, 78% of those with land owned by the household reported to have joint ownership of said land; disaggregated this represents 76% of female group members and 87% of female household members with joint ownership of land. This represents a slight increase in the number of women with sole ownership of agricultural land, and an associated decrease in joint ownership; however, the proportion of women without access, either jointly or solely, has remained largely unchanged.<sup>157</sup>

*Finding 14: JP-RWEE outcomes have been achieved, with adequacy, and contribute to rural women's secure livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development and the post-MDGs as measured by the abbreviated women's empowerment in agriculture index (A-WEAI).*

### A-WEAI Empowerment Scores

This section presents the tables for reporting the A-WEAI results with interpretation.

Table 11: Rwanda JP-RWEE WEAI Scores

Indicator	JP-RWEE Rwanda Sample Women
<b>5DE (1 - M0)</b>	<b>0.963</b>
Disempowerment score (1 - 5DE)	0.037
N (number of observations)	132
% of women achieving empowerment (1 - H)	90.9%
% of women not achieving empowerment (H)	9.1%
Mean 5DE score for not yet empowered women (1 - A)	0.58.
Mean disempowerment score (1-5DE) for not yet empowered women (A)	0.411
<b>GPI score (1 - HGPI x IGPI)</b>	<b>0.964</b>
N (number of dual-adult households)	106
% of women achieving gender parity (1 - HGPI)	85%
% of women not achieving gender parity (HGPI)	15%
Average empowerment gap (IGPI)	24%
<b>A-WEAI score (0.9 x 5DE + 0.1 x GPI)</b>	<b>0.963</b>

<sup>157</sup> It is important to note that the baseline data is built on secondary sources, while the current data for this indicator is based on the survey sample; therefore attribution cannot be directly assessed.

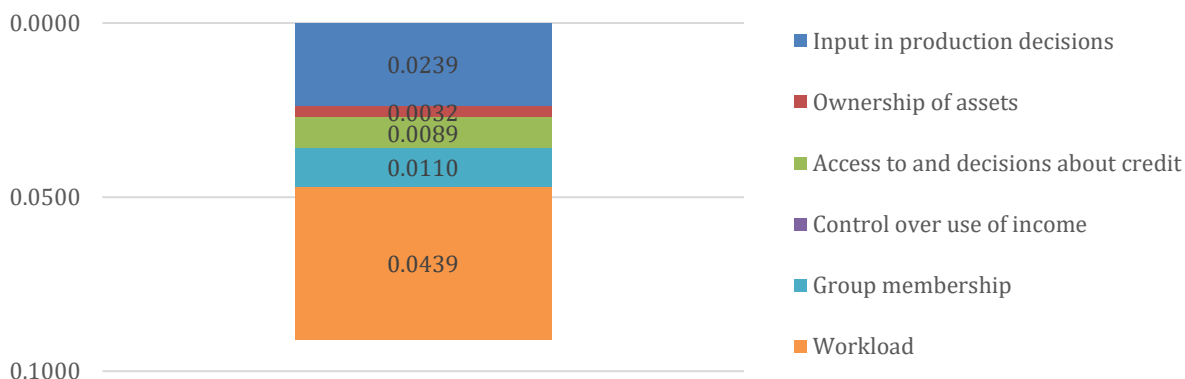


Table 11 reports the overall A-WEAI and its sub-indices (the 5DE and the GPI) for surveyed participants of JP-RWEE in Rwanda (2017-2019). Table 12 decomposes the disempowerment index to identify the areas that contributed most to disempowerment women participating in JP-RWEE. Figure 10 and Figure 11 present the configuration of disempowerment across sampled women. In lieu of a baseline report for JP-RWEE, the discussion below also provides comparison to a benchmark report in Rwanda addressing a similar population, *Feed the Future Rwanda: Zone of Influence Baseline Report* from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2013).<sup>158</sup>

### Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)

Overall the A-WEAI for surveyed beneficiaries of JP-RWEE is 0.963. It is a weighted average of the 5DE sub-index value of 0.963 and the GPI sub-index value of 0.964. This A-WEAI score for the JP-RWEE sample compares to USAID’s 2013 WEAI estimate for Rwanda of 0.910,<sup>159</sup> suggesting the programme’s beneficiaries are slightly more empowered than this estimate of the national level average, which is already quite high.

Figure 11: Contribution of each indicator to disempowerment (JP-RWEE Rwanda 2018-2019)



### Five Domains of Empowerment (5DE)

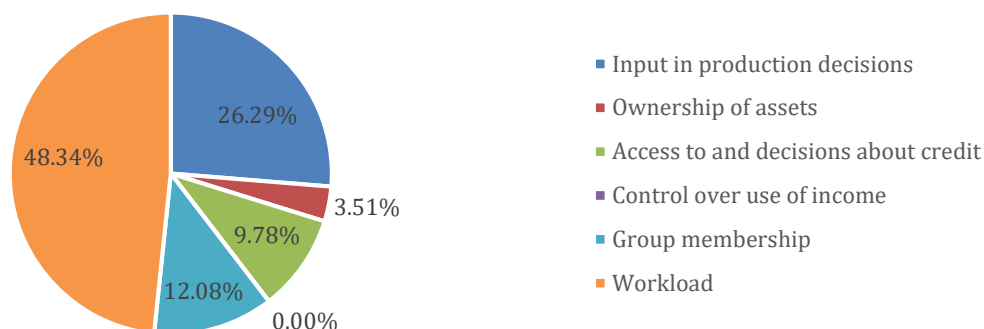
The 5DE sub-index assesses the degree to which participating women are empowered across the five domains examined by the A-WEAI. As mentioned, the 5DE score ranges from zero to one (0-1), where higher values indicate greater levels of empowerment. The 5DE for surveyed beneficiaries in JP-RWEE (Table 2) shows that 90.9% of women are empowered. Among the 9.1% of women who are not yet empowered, on average, they have inadequate achievements in 58.0% percent of domains. Thus, the women’s disempowerment index (M0) is 0.037. This compares to aggregate level calculations conducted by USAID in Rwanda wherein the 5DE is calculated as 0.90, with 70.21% of women having achieved empowerment (5DE score of 0.8 or greater) and an average adequacy score of 33.40 (average inadequacy score of 66.60).<sup>160</sup>

<sup>158</sup> USAID. “Feed the Future Rwanda Zone of Influence Baseline Report.” *Feed the Future, Rockville, MD: Westat* (2014).

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> USAID. “Feed the Future Rwanda Zone of Influence Baseline Report.” *Feed the Future, Rockville, MD: Westat* (2014).

Figure 12: Contribution of each of five domains to the disempowerment of women (JP-RWEE Rwanda 2018-2019)



The disempowerment measures (M0) for women and men surveyed are decomposed by domain and indicator and presented in Table 12 and Figures 10 and 11. Based on the decomposition of M0 in Table 12, the domains in the Rwanda JP-RWEE sample that contribute most to women’s disempowerment are *Time Allocation / Workload* (48.34%), *Production / Input in Productive Decisions* (26.29%), and *Leadership / Group Membership* (12.08%). The overall proportions are presented above in Figure 11 for reference.

Table 12: JP-RWEE Rwanda (2018-2019) sample 5DE decomposed by dimension and indicator

Statistics	Production <i>Input over productive decisions</i>	Resources <i>Ownership of assets</i>	Income <i>Access to and decisions over credit</i>	Income <i>Control over use of income</i>	Leadership <i>Group member</i>	Time <i>Workload</i>
Indicator Weight	0.20	0.13	0.07	0.20	0.20	0.20
<b>Women</b>						
Weighted Average	0.177	0.130	0.058	0.200	0.189	0.158
Inadequacy	0.023	0.003	0.009	0.000	0.011	0.042
Contribution of each indicator to disempowerment	26.29%	3.51%	9.78%	0.00%	12.08%	48.34%
Disempowerment Index	0.0239	0.0032	0.0089	0.0000	0.0110	0.0439

These proportions are consistent with estimates made by USAID in a larger study of Rwanda, in which *Time Allocation / Workload* (20.9%) and *Leadership / Group Membership* (14.2%) were still the second and third ranked contributors to women’s disempowerment at the national level. JP-RWEE’s sample is different from this national-level study with respect to *Resources* whereby in the USAID sample 23.9% of women were not yet empowered and had not met adequate achievement in *Access to and Decisions on Credit*. While noting the difference in populations served, this reference point does suggest that JP-RWEE has contributed to women’s access to and decisions on credit.

## Gender Parity Index (GPI)

The second sub-index of the A-WEAI is the GPI, which measures women’s empowerment in comparison to the empowerment of men. Under the GPI, a woman is considered to have achieved ‘gender parity’ if her 5DE achievements are commensurate with the man in her household. As illustrated in Table 11, the GPI for surveyed beneficiaries of JP-RWEE shows that 85% of women have gender parity with the primary male in their households. Of the 15% of women who are less empowered than the primary male in their household, the empowerment gap is 24%. Thus, the overall GPI amongst JP-RWEE’s sampled women is 0.964. This is consistent with USAID’s national-level estimate from their aggregate study in which the GPI for women in Rwanda was 0.96.<sup>161</sup>

Based on evidence provided through the A-WEAI and focus group discussions, JP-RWEE has contributed to women’s empowerment and some of the root causes of gender inequality, including prevailing social norms, attitudes and behaviors and equal access to resources.

Working with and strengthening women’s groups has increased women’s knowledge and confidence and connected them to valuable resources promoting their livelihoods. For example, the Village Savings and Loan Approach (VSLA), which was not a significant contributor to women’s disempowerment as measured by A-WEAI, has been seen to contribute towards improved livelihoods as well as positively align with initiatives supporting access to education, food security, and healthcare through medical insurance. While some women still experience ‘inadequacy’ in their contributions to production decisions, most women still experience personal control over assets and incomes generated through production and other means. This represents a gap which can be addressed through trainings, such as GALS trainings focused on improving shared household decision-making, being mindful that women are already over-burdened with responsibilities of work, which may also be constraining participation in production decisions and community groups.

Finally, there is evidence to suggest that JP-RWEE has positively affected the behaviors and attitudes of men living in the target communities. As one implementing partner explains prior to the intervention, “there are men who didn’t take into consideration ideas of their women before, or were not willing to involve women in their businesses. Now they are working together which speeds up their development. There are many women and men who are considered by the community because of their achievements, and that took them from one level to another, and they now participate in providing ideas.” Behavior change takes time, and these preliminary assessed attitudes, behaviors and perceptions of gender equality have been positively affected as a result of JP-RWEE activities in Rwanda communities.

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<sup>161</sup> USAID. “Feed the Future Rwanda Zone of Influence Baseline Report.” *Feed the Future, Rockville, MD: Westat* (2014).

A portrait of Jean Damascene Hagenimana, a man with short dark hair and a slight beard, wearing a dark brown zip-up jacket. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is slightly blurred, showing a building with a blue door and some wooden structures.

**Jean Damascene Hagenimana, GALS Champion for Myugariro Cooperative in Musanze District**

Before GALS trainings, I was a hostile husband to my wife and terrible father to my children. I used to spend all of my money on alcohol, drinking daily. Because of my ego, I never admitted my mistakes and I even was hiding property from my family: about 3 gardens, 2 cows, and RWF 400,000 on an account my wife knew nothing about. Even though I had those properties hidden, and my own property with my wife, our two children had to drop out of school because we couldn't pay their school fees. My kids were also starving; I failed to provide food for my family, but I didn't miss the bar. My children were even scared of me, and my wife had no rights of making family decisions without consulting me. Honestly, when I look back at my life, I realize that I was not a human being. I was like something else I don't even know how to explain.

I was Vice President of the cooperative at the time JP-RWEE came to our community. I was among the people selected to attend GALS trainings, and I remember how we were trained on climate change, gender equality, goal setting and the 'Diamond Dreams' activity where we commit to gender justice. In the climate justice trainings, we looked at the cause of our reduced harvests, and we started brainstorming the possible measures to take to address them. I learnt that mulching, creating ponds to capture flowing water, mixing trees and plants on one plot all help to reduce soil erosion. So far, I have now planted 32 trees; I practice mulching, which I never thought about before, and create terraces and ponds to collect water. With the help of applying fertilizers, selected and hybrid seeds, and good preparation of the garden, my harvests have increased. We also received trainings on setting goals, encouraging me to invest in the production of garlic. I am currently investing RWF 3,000 per kilogram, and I plan to plant 500kg, which will cost me RWF 1,500,000 RWF, but I am expecting to profit RWF 6,500,000.

Gender equality trainings helped me to understand the importance of working together with my wife. During one session, we had an exercise where we were required to list all of the activities women do for the benefit of the family, what men do for the family, what women do for their own benefit, and what men do for their own benefit. We also looked at the different amounts of money we spend on our families and ourselves. We were requested to balance, and I found that I only loved myself, not my family and my wife. It opened my eyes and I decided to change. The money I spent on alcohol was enough to satisfy the needs of my family and improve our livelihood. The assets that I was hiding could be utilized to increase our agriculture productivity, to improve our nutrition, and to generate more income. We also had other activities that helped me get to know my wife better. Even after 15 years of marriage, we didn't know what each other liked or didn't like. Now I know what things I can say or do that she does not like, and this has really improved our communication and strengthened our relationship.

Attending trainings changed my behavior and my perceptions about family and gender equality in a short time. I visibly started changing; I adjusted my pride and apologized to my family and friends. I took my children back to school and work with my wife in all activities at home. In the beginning my neighbors still didn't trust me, but now they see that I have changed and have asked me to train them too. I have trained 20 other people in GALS methodologies, and I serve as a good example in the community.



## IV. Conclusions

### Overall

**Conclusion 1:** The overall response and coordination of JP-RWEE in Rwanda was slow to start and Participating Agencies did not immediately establish mechanisms or pathways for planning, coordination and communication, resulting in a lapse in cohesion experienced amongst beneficiaries, Implementing Partners and other key stakeholders. Commitment from all Agencies' Country Representatives and leadership within JP-RWEE, renewed efforts to capitalize on the Joint Programme modality and take advantage of Implementing Agencies' and Partners' expertise. With this second phase of a more cohesive response initiated in 2017, JP-RWEE in Rwanda prioritized the most vulnerable populations, providing them with a comprehensive package of services founded on the value addition of Implementing Agencies and Partners and relevant to beneficiaries' immediate needs.

*Links to Findings: 1, 2, 7, 8, 10*

**Conclusion 2:** Implementing Agencies have assumed essential roles in the development landscape in Rwanda, demonstrating a strong understanding of, and alignment with, the needs of rural women as well as national and international priorities related to gender equality and women's empowerment, food and nutrition security, and inclusive economic growth. Qualitative evidence indicates that activities supported through JP-RWEE are positively received by beneficiaries and national stakeholders, and notable progress has been made in increasing women's production and access to finance, thereby increasing women's experienced incomes and financial independence. However, reduced and discontinuous funding has limited JP-RWEE's effectiveness and efficiency in Rwanda. With limited funding shared across four agencies and a short timeline for implementation, women's leadership (Outcome 3) and an improved and gender-sensitive policy environment (Outcome 4) have not been prioritized areas for activities. Fewer results have been realized related to leadership and policy change, as well as other longer-term outcomes, such as increased and sustainable market access and agro-processing leading to market-responsive business creation and income-generation. However, an accurate quantitative determination of the effectiveness of activities in terms of progress against specific indicators is limited by the lack of systematic quantitative outcome-related data on JP-RWEE.

*Links to Findings: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9*

### Programming

**Conclusion 3:** JP-RWEE has systematically documented and analyzed its context and alignment with rural women's needs at the international, national, and community levels and utilized human rights-based approaches, focusing on inclusion through the recruitment and integration of the most marginalized women in Rwandan society (e.g. single mothers, HIV+ women, former sex workers) into formally registered cooperative groups. While recruiting marginalized groups into cooperatives sometimes resulted in unintended effects at the onset of activities, such as increased experience of social stigma or household disputes as a result of being included in public spaces, recruitment strategies mostly resulted in improved social inclusion through formal registration of cooperatives and integration



of the most vulnerable into pre-existing support systems. If JP-RWEE had utilized a real baseline on beneficiary status, as opposed to secondary data on national averages, it is likely that JP-RWEE would have observed more significant quantitative improvements on impact-level indicators, such as decreased undernourishment and food insecurity, increased ownership of land, and observable decreases in women's 'disempowerment' across domains of the A-WEAI.

However, at the same time, considering targeted women's vulnerable state at baseline, substantial resources are required to elevate women's status by addressing the entirety of the Theory of Change and envisaged impact-level results. As such, women's vulnerability affects the sustainability of results, as women face more individual barriers to training attendance, knowledge transfer and subsequent integration into other flagship programmes of Implementing Agencies targeting larger groups of beneficiaries.

*Links to Findings: 1, 2, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14*

**Conclusion 4:** JP-RWEE has contributed to rural women's improved livelihoods through improved agricultural practices and the re-investment of savings into agricultural inputs, resulting in a reported 2-8x increase in vegetable and livestock production, improved diet and nutrition, and attributable income gains, particularly at the cooperative / women's group level. While there is evidence that beneficiaries are increasing their agricultural production as a result of their participation in programme activities, there is less evidence to suggest that they are individually diversifying their agricultural products and breaking into agri-business and self-employment. Notably, there is little change in the balance of crops produced by participating farmers, with maize and beans still representing the majority crop cultivated amongst the sampled respondents; diversification of production has largely occurred at a small-scale through kitchen gardens, varying the types of nutritious foods consumed within households. However, even individual dietary diversity amongst beneficiaries remains low. Larger-scale production of cash crops provides a means through which farmers can increase their income, and thereby improve their standard of living.

Tomatoes provide a useful example of diversification, as there were increases in production but capacity limitations on the benefits yielded by the intervention. The increased production was driven by the provision of greenhouses; in this case, the greenhouse capacity did not sufficiently meet the local demand that the supply was paired to. As a result, buyers felt that the supply was not consistent or reliable, and therefore looked elsewhere for the produce. Related to this note, there are only limited cases of new business activities amongst participating farmers observed as a result of participation in the programme activities. For example, there remains limited involvement in agricultural processing activities amongst beneficiaries, despite trainings and the provision of processing equipment, though certification of processed goods does present a barrier to entry.

*Links to Findings: 5, 12*

**Conclusion 5:** Women participating in the programme had observably low literacy levels and reported difficulties engaging with some of the content. This affects the capacity of women to benefit from programme participation, as the 'train-the-trainer' modality and written materials limits the extent to which knowledge is transferred from trained leaders to other beneficiaries. Furthermore, the lower levels of literacy amongst participating women curtails their progress into leadership roles and influences male perceptions regarding their capacity to lead.

Despite these limitations to knowledge acquisition and leadership attainment, opportunities to practice community leadership through cooperative groups, learning visits and agri-shows, and household leadership through the application of GALS tools promoting shared planning, visioning and decision-making have resulted in women's increased confidence and self-esteem. Women's confidence has served as a means to overcome women's reported literacy barriers, with some women advancing into leadership roles in cooperatives, village governments, and the National Women's Council. Women's increased confidence has also supported improved financial outcomes and independence, as women feel more confident in interacting with formal and informal financial institutions, contributing savings and taking out loans to fulfill personal and household needs for health and education.

*Links to Findings: 2, 6, 11*

**Conclusion 6:** The A-WEAI score shows that most women have achieved adequacy across domains of production, resources, income, leadership and time and gender parity in the household. Of the 9.1% of women not achieving 'adequacy' across domains, and therefore classified as disempowered, the primary contributing factor to their disempowerment was a heavy workload on both productive and domestic tasks. This again ties back to the vulnerability of women served and the various competing priorities over their time: whether they are single parents with sole caretaking and income-generation responsibilities for their households or women who are HIV+ with significant health needs, women engaged as part of this review felt it difficult to attend trainings and group meetings, as well as find time for making productive decisions regarding harvests, assets, and credit and participate in community leadership. As such, some women's achieved empowerment was compromised.

*Links to Findings: 1, 14*

## Coordination, Leadership and Strategy

**Conclusion 7:** Reduced budgets and discontinuity in funding timelines sometimes compromised a more coherent and planned response amongst Implementing Agencies and Partners in Rwanda. In the national programme design phase, the Performance Management Framework defined at the global level helped to define results areas and associated activities contextualized to Rwanda, however limited resources provided at the onset of programme activities in 2014 and 2015 required Agencies to de-prioritize some activities, including the recruitment of a national coordinator and knowledge management specialist, and created gaps in the intervention logic at the national level. In the first phase, from 2014-2016, monitoring efforts were constrained by resources, including time, money, and human capacity, thereby limiting capacity to effectively collect, use and report on reliable data tied to programme activities. While improvements have been realized on the joint implementation and monitoring of activities, gaps in data still exist as a result of previously experienced constraints at baseline.

Furthermore, the annual funding cycle interrupts the continuous operations of the programme by IPs, creating uncertainty that undermines the planning process. Due to the short funding cycle, Agencies resort to re-contracting IPs each funding cycle. This skews the service provision offered by partners such that their implementation occurs over a shorter period than they would otherwise prefer to deliver on longer-term outcomes, such as increased income and sustainable market access, and creating gaps in services provided to beneficiaries. The short funding cycle also limits the time Implementing Partners are able to plan and align on activities and timelines amongst themselves, which sometimes resulted in

the duplication of activities or experience of 'activity fatigue' from beneficiaries. Implementing Agencies and Partners' increased communication, flexibility to adapt, and engagement with the each other and the beneficiaries have helped to address such challenges as they arise.

*Links to Findings: 7, 8, 11*

**Conclusion 8:** JP-RWEE is the first joint programme initiated amongst UN Women and the Rome-based Agencies, and each Agency brings a unique, though intersecting, approach to women's improved livelihoods and rights achievement. While coordination and cohesion in activities was slow to take hold in this new JP, over time, Implementing Agencies have worked to maximize strategic partnerships and leverage their comparative strengths, contributing to enhanced learning, capacity, and synergies amongst Implementing Agencies and Partners. The global management and coordination structure, through the MPTF and ISC, helped facilitate increased cohesion and accountability to results.

Furthermore, the inter-agency alliance formed through the Joint Programme pushed forward the 'Delivering as One UN' agenda and capitalized on the collective influencing power of the UN. This was seen as a tremendous advantage for IPs, helping to mobilize additional resources to serve JP-RWEE beneficiaries or integrate JP-RWEE components into other projects. However, Agencies have not mobilized resources nationally to the same extent as IPs. The positioning of JP-RWEE in the UNDAP II is expected to help mobilize resources more effectively and decrease dependence on Sida and Norway as the sole donors.

*Links to Findings: 7, 10, 11*

## V. Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** In order to maintain the cohesion in planning and implementation that has been established within this second phase (2017-19), and reduce the risks to quality potentially associated with increasing the population served, continue working with the scaled down number of cooperative groups (ten, in this case). In order to increase scale, consider the Graduation Approach developed by BRAC in Bangladesh and scaled by organizations such as Innovations for Poverty Action and TrickleUp, focused on similar outcomes of increased food security and sustainable livelihoods. While the intervention areas align, targeting the poorest households, providing consumption and production support, building savings, and providing skills training on entrepreneurship and market access, the Graduation Approach also delineates criteria for graduation from programme support, allowing resources to be reallocated to other beneficiaries and cooperative groups once metrics have been achieved.

**Operational Actions:** Define graduation criteria and measurement strategies, aligned with the Performance Management Framework (PMF). Within the criteria, it is important to define the unit of measurement for graduation, whether the individual, household, cooperative group, or community/district achieves certain outcomes and qualifies for 'graduation'. For JP-RWEE, the unit of measurement should be at the cooperative, rather than household, level. The graduation criteria could also align with entry requirements for other programmes operating within Agencies, such as integration into the Farm to Market Alliance (FtMa) of WFP. Some examples of graduation criteria include: maintenance of a minimum savings balance, the maintenance of a set loan repayment rate within VSL groups, a minimum number of markets accessed, and/or the eating of at least two meals per day for a quantified period of time.

**Links to Conclusion:** 1 and 2

**Priority Status:** High

**Directed to:** National Coordinator, working with SC and Agency Focal Points

**Recommendation 2:** JP-RWEE in Rwanda should improve the consistency and accuracy of monitoring data, especially with respect to addressing the current limitations and gaps in baseline data. This should include setting aside resources in order to establish a clear and measurable baseline within future iterations of the programme. This is particularly necessary for indicators on production and income, where clear units of measurement and measurement strategies are required to assess the percent change over time. The systematized collection of data on indicators will also help to strengthen efforts already undertaken to continuously align the relevance of programme activities with the stated needs of beneficiaries. While the data from this review can provide a reference point, it is not a baseline in the truest sense, since most cooperatives have participated in programme activities for one to three years. Specific baseline data should be collected on any new cooperatives integrated into programming.

**Operational Actions:** As with the graduation criteria, more specific definitions of each indicator in the PMF need to be established and contextualized to Rwanda, to better define the units of measurement and ensure consistency in understanding across Implementing Agencies and Partners. The definitions used by Implementing Agencies and Partners in their internal M&E guidelines for similar indicators can

guide this process. In addition, JP-RWEE focal points should review standardized questions and tools already used by Agencies and IPs so as to not reinvent metrics and measurement strategies and burden staff with additional data collection. For example, CARE International has established best practices in the measurement of indicators on financial literacy, VSLA effectiveness, and leadership, which can be integrated into JP-RWEE Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidelines.

Develop clear JP-RWEE Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidelines for Rwanda, which include the clarified definitions, units of measurement, standardized measurement questions/tools, and the specific organization and person responsible for collecting and updating the information in the reporting logical framework. Through this process, explore the possibility of using digital tools amongst beneficiaries and implementing partners to reduce the burden of data collection. As the organization most directly interfacing with beneficiaries, Implementing Partners should be largely responsible for data collection, and with clear and established guidelines for data collection and data entry, significant improvements should be seen. Furthermore, utilize the newly recruited Global Knowledge Management Coordinator to define expectations for a more coordinated national learning strategy.

**Links to Conclusion:** 2, 3 and 7

**Priority Status:** High

**Directed to:** *Implementing Agency Focal Points, with participation from the JP-RWEE Global Knowledge Management Coordinator and M&E staff and programme managers of participating IPs*

**Recommendation 3:** Continued assessments, through improved monitoring strategies, will help to better understand the constraints to participation. Based on the review, there is a need to target beneficiary literacy, likely through advocacy and partnerships and/or improved training methods, in order to augment the benefits of programme participation for all female group members, including knowledge acquisition and the advancement into leadership roles which require an understanding of written content.

**Operational Actions:** It is not possible to provide literacy training directly, considering the JP-RWEE budgets and goals in other intervention areas, however, utilizing the collective influencing power of the UN, connect cooperatives to local organizations and/or government programmes which may be able to integrate JP-RWEE beneficiaries into their projects. Conduct an assessment of the education landscape in targeted areas to understand the existence of literacy-focused interventions and feasibility of facilitating connections within the programme scope.

Another efficient solution would be to establish a 'mentorship' programme within the smaller VSL groups, pairing women with lower levels of literacy to women with higher levels of literacy. The mentoring relationships can help ensure materials covered in trainings are reviewed individually to increase understanding and learning amongst both the 'mentor' and 'mentee'. Implementing Agencies can also review and support the development of standardized training materials in local languages, increasing cohesion in messaging across IPs and sustainable knowledge transfer.

**Links to Conclusion:** 3, 5 and 7

**Priority Status:** Medium

**Directed to:** *Implementing Partners focused on leadership outcomes, UN Women and IFAD Focal Point, National Coordinator*

**Recommendation 4:** Focus should remain on cooperative group production and kitchen gardens for household use, considering the limited land available to cultivate in Rwanda. With available land presenting constraints to market access and diversification of crops, consider focusing large-scale cooperative production across Districts. For example, Kirehe focuses on sorghum, Ngoma on maize, and Nyaruguru on tomatoes, to develop hubs for quality crop production and processing. For processing crops such as tomatoes, which require certification from RSB, focus on connecting the cooperative hubs to small agro-processors that are already processing tomatoes into ketchups and jams, increasing their supply of quality products and farmers' access to sustainable markets.

**Operational Activities:** Define the 'hubs' based on previous activities conducted in the Districts and in consultation with agronomists and cooperatives. For example, Ngoma may focus on maize due to its dry climate and/or Nyaruguru may focus on tomatoes because of the existence of greenhouses and plans to establish more small-scale irrigation. Once established, ensure plans for distribution of processing equipment is centralized around hubs, ensuring multiple supported cooperative groups in a District may be able to access the equipment. Furthermore, connect hubs to agro-processors, including existing WFP partner, Africa Improved Foods, or previous JP-RWEE implementing partner, Duhamic Adri, which has a separate social enterprise called Sosoma Industries, processing sorghum, soy and maize flour. Facilitate dedicated buyer agreements with hubs, instead of cooperatives, pooling crops and ensuring sufficient quantity of quality products. Integrate specialized support on hub crops through agronomists, who continue to oversee the quality of production in the community for the selected crop.

**Links to Conclusion:** 4

**Priority Status:** Medium

**Directed to:** *FAO and WFP Focal Point, Implementing Partners focused on production and market access, National Coordinator*

**Recommendation 5:** JP-RWEE has already done well to include men in this women-centered programme, though behavior change takes time and constraints still exist. Women's responsibility for unpaid care work needs to be more directly addressed in programme activities. Since the A-WEAI is based on self-reported data on access to and control over resources, and in many cases men also registered 'inadequacy' across domains, it is possible that men are feeling disenfranchised, which is hindering overall progress. The recommendation is not to shift focus to men; it is possible to increase the number of men reached while still maintaining focus on women. The reality is, men are interacting with women on a daily basis in households and community leadership roles, and taking a 'systems' approach to gender equality would bolster women's economic empowerment.

**Operational Activities:** Integrate more messaging on gender equality, rights and leadership into trainings to overcome and/or transform barriers of men's perceptions of female leaders at the community-level and as main contributors to unpaid care work at the household level. Additional efforts to involve men within rights discussions under GALS activities is advisable – best practice in this area includes mixed workshops on specific rights issues or points of concern between women and men. In Rwanda, recent research conducted by Promundo<sup>39</sup> reveals that weekly meetings with male peer groups over four to five months, with women joining 50% of the time, reduces men's likelihood of using violence against female partners by approximately 50%, increases the amount of time men spend on household chores by one hour, and increases household income. Women in JP-RWEE experienced barriers to sharing GALS tools and learning with spouses, due to lack of time or because of men's slow



uptake. Therefore, increasing the number of men involved within trainings and/or as champions and examples of gender parity, including spouses as well as community leaders and religious leaders who may promote or hold onto traditional gender norms, could facilitate rights achievement and economic empowerment while also addressing potential unintended affects like gender-based violence.

**Links to Conclusion:** 3, 5, 6

**Priority Status:** High

**Directed to:** *Implementing Partners focused on rights awareness and leadership outcomes, UN Women and IFAD Focal Point, National Coordinator*

**Recommendation 6:** JP-RWEE should lengthen the funding cycle (or implementation cycle) to allow for medium-to-long-term effects to be observed amongst participating groups. The current process for securing funds is a year in duration wherein Sida and the Norwegian Government are expected to approve funds, which are then disbursed over a period of three to four months to implementing partners. Implementation thereafter occurs over an insufficient duration in the field before Implementing Partners transition to a new area or new activities. As a result, long-term outcomes such as behavior changes amongst beneficiaries do not have a sufficient time-period to be observed amongst participating groups. A lengthened funding cycle would also create time for increased planning and coordination amongst Implementing Partners as well as with GoR stakeholders, which should be facilitated by Implementing Agencies.

**Operational Activities:** Using the results of this review, Global Coordination should collaborate with existing funders to understand feasibility of providing multi-year funds in subsequent iterations. At the same time, Country Representatives and JP-RWEE focal points should take time to assess the funding landscape and petition for multi-year funding from other sources, including through existing UN coordination and funding mechanisms as well as from other governments. Using the additional time, integrate improved coordination mechanisms amongst Implementing Partners, and set targets for government engagement and policy influencing and monitoring.

**Links to Conclusion:** 7, 8

**Priority Status:** High

**Directed to:** *Implementing Agency Focal Points and Representatives, as well as Global Coordination and JP-RWEE donors (current and prospective); Leadership from UN Women Rwanda on policy engagement efforts*



WFP 2019, Tomatoes from Greenhouse Supported through JP-RWEE Funds and Partnerships