



GLOBAL EVALUATION BRIEF

Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment



Overall Goal: To secure women's livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development and the SDG's

Duration: October 2014 – June 2021

Location: Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda

Budget: USD 29 164 859

Beneficiaries: Approx. 80 000 direct beneficiaries

Implementing Agencies: The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (UN Women) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)

Programme overview

The Joint Programme on “Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women” (JP RWEE) aims to secure rural women's livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development. The programme is the only such initiative between the RBAs and UN Women, and combines each agency's expertise to tackle the inequalities faced by rural women in the economic sphere. The recently completed final evaluation, which had a qualitative focus, covered implementation in all participating countries and included country level studies in Guatemala, Nepal and Niger.

The JP RWEE plans to scale up this proven model, subject to successful resource mobilisation, building on the successful approaches and achievements, and incorporating the learnings from the first phase.

Final evaluation: key highlights

The JP RWEE is clearly aligned with key national policy frameworks, as well as broader international commitments and frameworks, including the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.



Programme achievements: snapshot

1. Enhanced food security and improved nutrition

- Programme interventions achieved **significant increases in vegetable and livestock production**, and in **diet and nutrition** in all countries.
- Women adopted various **improved production technologies** leading to **increases in agricultural productivity**.
- Improved nutrition led to **less expenditure on health services** and **more disposable income**, which was used to purchase food and other items, including school fees

2. Increased income opportunities to secure livelihoods and access decent work

- The JP RWEE **significantly contributed to improving rural women's livelihoods** through improved agricultural practices, access to new technologies, linkages to markets, awareness raising and leadership building.
- The programme's entry point and approach of **working through women's groups produced multiple gains for women including** increased skills and capacity; access to credit; links to markets; leadership ability and self-confidence.
- The **savings groups**, which were at the core of the programme, emerged as a very **powerful transformative element with considerable likelihood of being sustained**.
- Reports from **all countries**, including from beneficiaries, have **indicated that JP RWEE beneficiaries have managed to be more resilient to the impacts of COVID-19**.

3. Enhanced leadership and participation in communities and rural institutions

- **Gender transformative approaches** and working with women collectively led to **strong transformative effects for women, who systematically reported positive changes** in income, nutrition, entrepreneurship, rights awareness, investment on children's education and male behavioral change.

- **Increased individual self-esteem, self-confidence** and stronger **engagement in community processes including leadership**, was realised, with **women holding leadership positions** in collective entities and being elected to local decision-making bodies.
- **Shifts in social norms reported by men and women** including women being allowed to work outside of the home, sharing of household chores, and **increased status of women in the community**.

4. Gender responsive policy environment

- National governments were supported in the **integration of gender into agricultural and rural development strategies and policies**.
- Interventions were **integrated into national systems and structures**, including through local government implementation and coordination.

Partnerships

- The Joint Programme was unanimously recognized as a force that **leveraged the comparative advantages of each UN agency**, creating synergy between them, as well as between government institutions and local level community organizations.
- The **synergy developed** through the JP RWEE partnerships has also **prompted new partnerships outside the JP RWEE**.
- Operational arrangements have been replicated in other UN joint programmes as a good practice.

Key learnings

- A **uniform, joint approach to M&E** enabling comparison across countries should be included.
- Investing in **local government ownership and national policy level change takes time** and requires government commitment and stability.
- **Climate resilience and recovery from COVID-19** should be integrated into future programme design.
- Global level **learning, policy and advocacy** should be maximized.
- **Multi-annual funding** is a pre-requisite for achieving long term change.