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Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



IFAD

Investing in rural people



World Food
Programme



<p>Programme Title & Project Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Title: Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women MPTF Office Project Reference Number: 00092000-6 	<p>Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results</p> <p>Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda</p> <p>The strategic result is to secure rural women's livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development and the SDGs</p>
<p>Participating Organization(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO IFAD WFP UN Women 	<p>Implementing Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government Ministries, NGOs/CSOs, private sector, and other UN Agencies and International Organizations
<p>Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</p> <p>Total approved budget as per project document: US\$ 35,000,000</p> <p>MPTF Contribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO: US\$ 7,188,265 IFAD: US\$ 2,826,695 UN Women: US\$ 8,539,158 WFP: US\$ 8,103,189 <p>TOTAL: US\$ 26,657,307</p>	<p>Programme Duration</p> <p>Overall Duration: 60 months (as per programme document)</p> <p>Start Date 15/10/2012 Original End Date 14/10/2017 Current End Date 31/12/2021</p>
<p>Programme Assessment/Review/MTR</p> <p>Assessment/Review <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Mid-Term Evaluation Report <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>Report Submitted By</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Catherine McCarron Title: JP RWEE Global Coordinator Email address: catherine.mccarron@wfp.org

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO)**



Investing in rural people

**INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT (IFAD)**



WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)

**UNITED NATIONS ENTITY FOR GENDER
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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AA:	Administrative Agent
ATA:	Agricultural Transformation Agency
BALI:	Business Action Learning for Inclusion
CGR:	Community Grain Reserve
CSO:	Civil Society Organisation
CSW:	Commission on the Status of Women
FAO:	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFS:	Farmer Field School
GALS:	Gender Action Learning System
GCU:	Global Coordination Unit
GES:	Gender Equality Strategy
GESI:	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
HGSFP:	Home Grown School Feeding Programme
ICT:	Information and Communication Technologies
IFAD:	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGA:	Income Generating Activity
IP:	Implementing Partner
ISC:	International Steering Committee
JP:	Joint Programme
M&E:	Monitoring & Evaluation
MOA:	Ministry of Agriculture
MPTFO:	Multi Partner Trust Fund Office
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSC:	National Steering Committee
PO:	Producer Organisation
PUNOs:	Participating UN Organizations
RUSACCO:	Rural Savings and Credit Cooperatives
RWEE:	Rural Women's Economic Empowerment
SHG:	Self-Help Group
SRH:	Sexual and Reproductive Health
TAC:	Technical Advisory Committee
ToT:	Training of Trainers
TWG:	Technical Working Group
UNDG:	United Nations Development Group
UN Women:	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VSLA:	Village Savings and Loan Associations
WEAI:	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WEE:	Women's Economic Empowerment
WFP:	World Food Programme

DEFINITIONS

Allocation	Amount approved by the Steering Committee for a project/programme.
Approved Project/Programme	A project/programme including budget, etc., that is approved by the Steering Committee for fund allocation purposes.
Contributor Commitment	Amount(s) committed by a donor to a Fund in a signed Standard Administrative Arrangement with the UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF Office), in its capacity as the Administrative Agent. A commitment may be paid or pending payment.
Contributor Deposit	Cash deposit received by the MPTF Office for the Fund from a contributor in accordance with a signed Standard Administrative Arrangement.
Delivery Rate	The percentage of funds that have been utilized, calculated by comparing expenditures reported by a Participating Organization against the 'net funded amount'.
Indirect Support Costs	A general cost that cannot be directly related to any particular programme or activity of the Participating Organizations. UNDG policy establishes a fixed indirect cost rate of 7% of programmable costs. As of 2018, WFP applies a fixed indirect cost rate of 6.5%
Net Funded Amount	Amount transferred to a Participating Organization less any refunds transferred back to the MPTF Office by a Participating Organization.
Participating Organization	A UN Organization or other inter-governmental Organization that is an implementing partner in a Fund, as represented by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the MPTF Office for a particular Fund.
Project Expenditure	The sum of expenses and/or expenditure reported by all Participating Organizations for a Fund irrespective of which basis of accounting each Participating Organization follows for donor reporting.
Project Financial Closure	A project or programme is considered financially closed when all financial obligations of an operationally completed project or programme have been settled, and no further financial charges may be incurred.
Project Operational Closure	A project or programme is considered operationally closed when all programmatic activities for which Participating Organization(s) received funding have been completed.
Project Start Date	Date of transfer of first instalment from the MPTF Office to the Participating Organization.
Total Approved Budget	This represents the cumulative amount of allocations approved by the Steering Committee.
US Dollar Amount	The financial data in the report is recorded in US Dollars and due to rounding off of numbers, the totals may not add up.

1. NARRATIVE REPORT

Executive Summary

The Joint Programme 'Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women' (JP RWEE) is a global initiative that aims to secure rural women's livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development. Jointly implemented since 2014 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UN Women and the World Food Programme (WFP) in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda, the JP RWEE builds on each Agency's comparative advantages and strengths to improve the status of women in rural areas.

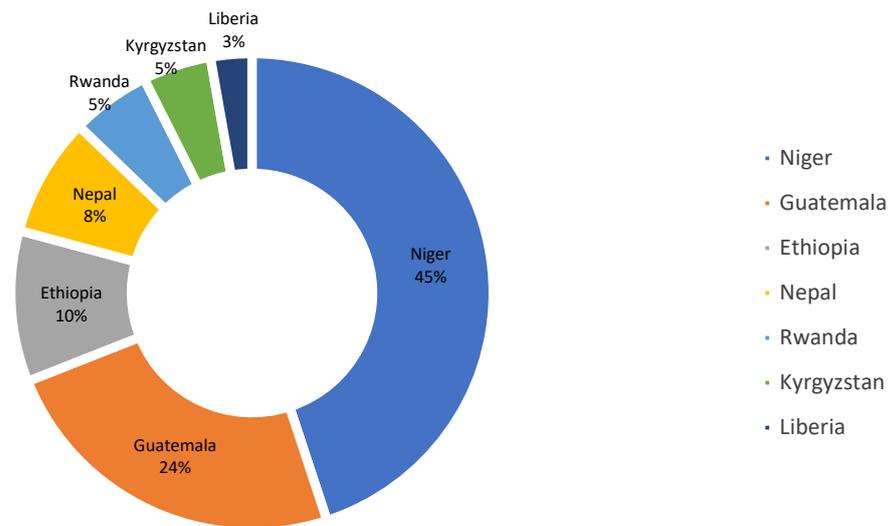
A total of \$7,600,957, was allocated to the JP RWEE for its final year of implementation in 2020, including an allocation of \$6,300,000 divided equally to each country team, and of \$1,095,571 to Global Coordination, including for the implementation of the Global Learning Plan which incorporates a final evaluation. The allocation was agreed at the International Steering Committee (ISC) meeting in November 2019, during which country workplans, reviewed and assessed against compliance criteria, were approved. The actions outlined in the workplans built on the progress made in the preceding years of JP RWEE implementation and incorporated efforts to further embed national and local ownership of the programme and ensure lasting, transformative change. The implementation period of the programme was, however, extended with the approval of a six month no-cost extension by the programme's donors following the declaration of the global COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. The pandemic had, and continues to have, a far reaching impact worldwide, and all seven participating JP RWEE countries experienced lockdowns and restrictions to movement which impeded the ability to implement the programme as planned. Despite the unprecedented crisis that characterised most of 2020, the far reaching socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in rural communities, and the disruption caused to programming, the JP RWEE was able to achieve significant results and generate important learning during the year. This was particularly important as the programme's first phase draws to a close and key learning is generated to inform the design of future potential programming.

The programme reached a total of 37,251 beneficiaries in the seven countries during 2020, as disaggregated in the table below. Since the start of the programme, a total of 80,092 (64,971 females and 15,121 males) beneficiaries have been reached. As per the JP RWEE capacity development strategy, the programme continued to work with women in groups to develop both individual and collective capacities to increase production and income, and to enable improved access to assets and opportunities. These groups include both informal groups and self-help groups, and formally registered cooperatives and Producer Organizations.

Country	Women	Men	Total	Indirect Beneficiaries ¹
Ethiopia	3,571	229	3,800	18,500
Guatemala	7,061	1,868	8,929	38,165
Kyrgyzstan	1,666	50	1,716	5,148
Liberia	809	218	1,027	1,989
Nepal	3,002	0	3,002	12,908
Niger	15,291	1,500	16,791	26,280
Rwanda	1,653	333	1,986	9,374
TOTAL	33,053	4,198	37,251	114,364

¹ The number of household members have been calculated based on the determined household size for the relevant region at the country level.

Number of direct beneficiaries - 2020



Results were achieved to varying degrees across the four programme outcomes, with some activities and intended outcomes more affected by the pandemic than others. Considerable increases in agricultural production were achieved, which helped ensure that beneficiaries were able to continue to consume balanced, nutritious diets during periods when income was reduced and access to markets limited. Furthermore, despite the impact of COVID-19 prevention measures on economies and livelihoods, women’s groups were able to generate impressive income through sales and, for the most part, to keep their business operating and sustain their livelihoods. Under Outcome 3, significant progress was seen in relation to transformative change, evidenced primarily by an increase in women’s participation and leadership at the local level during the community response to COVID-19. Women showed confidence to take on leadership roles, articulate their needs and demand inclusion in planning and response mechanisms, whilst the wider community showed acceptance and recognition of their contribution and value as women. This was particularly significant in communities where traditional gender roles are embedded across all aspects of community life.

A further success of the programme in 2020 was the reported resilience shown by women and their households to the economic shocks caused by the pandemic, which can be largely attributed to the programme strategies and actions implemented under the JP RWEE. This was evidenced by the ability of women, both individually and within groups, to provide for their household and sustain livelihoods without the need for external assistance or significant loss of assets. For the most part, as a result of the direct action of the programme, women were able to uphold their nutrition and food security status through home grown production, to access credit through their group participation, and to diversify and adapt their enterprises and business activities to sustain livelihoods.

The JP RWEE model of tackling barriers to gender equality and women’s economic empowerment through a holistic, partnership approach was well evidenced during 2020 as JP RWEE stakeholders came together to adapt programme implementation modalities and workplans as efficiently as possible. Local stakeholders, including local government, were key to enabling the programme to continue, supporting implementation and carrying out monitoring and supervision of activities at the field level.

Finally, alongside the pandemic, the vulnerability of many of the participating countries to the impacts of climate change, was evidenced during 2020 through adverse weather events² and, in Ethiopia, a devastating and long lasting locust infestation. These experiences clearly highlight the need to factor in climate resilience as a cross cutting issue to any future programming.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, data collection was not always possible during the reporting year, and a considerable number of activities, such as trainings and awareness raising planned under outcome 3, were postponed to 2021. Full results across all planned activities will be available at the subsequent final report stage. Some key results from 2020 include the following:

- **101.25** percent average increase in the agricultural production of participating rural women³;
- **9,598** people (8,789 women and 734 men) gained access to improved production techniques⁴;
- **8,286** people (6,812 women, 591 men) received nutrition education or training⁵;
- **9,645** people (8,083 women and 1,562 men) accessed and managed food reserves⁶;
- **US\$539,650** generated from sales at the individual and group levels, raising the aggregated amount for 2016-2020 to US\$ 2.59 million⁷;
- **6,452** rural women equipped with improved skills on business and financial management, value chains, marketing and negotiation⁸;
- **6,409** rural women engaged in self-employment / income-generating activities, in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors⁹;
- **5,149** women organised in 212 saving groups with approximately US\$ 367,939 saved;¹⁰
- **21** informal groups were formally registered as, or incorporated into, 21 legal entities (POs/cooperatives).¹¹

This annual report is presented in two parts: the narrative report and the financial report. It consolidates the available quantitative data, information and examples presented in the individual country level reports and their indicator performance tables.

I. Purpose

Women are major contributors to the agricultural sector and generate vital income that contributes to rural economies, as well as the health and wellbeing of their families and communities. They are at the forefront of food production, food processing and distribution, and play a critical role in securing food security and nutrition. They are key agents of change, central to the eradication of poverty and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Despite this, rural women continue to face systemic barriers in accessing services, productive resources and opportunities, including land, agricultural inputs, finance, information, technology, education and training. They also carry a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, which further impedes their ability to access opportunities, including decent work. They are predominantly excluded from decision making and their rights, priorities and contributions have been largely overlooked by mainstream policies and institutions. Deeply entrenched social norms and patriarchal systems are the root cause of persisting inequalities and the disempowerment of rural women.

² Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Niger.

³ Guatemala, Liberia, Nepal and Niger – Data unavailable in Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan and Rwanda

⁴ All countries

⁵ Ethiopia, Guatemala, Niger and Rwanda – Data unavailable in Kyrgyzstan, Liberia and Nepal.

⁶ All countries

⁷ Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal and Rwanda – Data unavailable in Niger.

⁸ All countries

⁹ All countries

¹⁰ Total amount from three countries: Guatemala, Liberia, Nepal.

¹¹ Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal and Rwanda

It was based on these premises, and to respond to the diversity of issues constraining rural women's economic empowerment, which require an integrated approach and go beyond the mandate of any individual UN entity to tackle alone, that the Joint Programme 'Advancing Progress Towards Women's Economic Empowerment' (JP RWEE) was established in October 2012 by FAO, IFAD, UN Women and WFP. Since October 2014, the JP RWEE has been implemented in seven countries (Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger, and Rwanda), in order to respond to the multiple challenges faced by rural women, and with a view to unlocking their potential as farmers, entrepreneurs and agents of change. The Joint Programme builds on evidence that joint efforts are required to achieve gender equality and women's economic empowerment, building on the comparative advantages of its participating UN organisations, and enabling a holistic approach to tackling gender inequality. The JP RWEE aims to secure rural women's livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development and is based on four outcome areas: i) Improved food and nutrition security; ii) Increased income to secure livelihoods; iii) Enhanced leadership and participation in decision-making; and iv) A more gender-responsive policy environment for rural women in agriculture.

Through these action areas and beyond, the JP RWEE adopts a holistic approach to women's empowerment that has a catalytic effect, attaining outcomes that are far-reaching and sustainable. To achieve its objectives, partnerships are key to the success of the JP RWEE implementation. These partnerships include the host governments of participating countries, non-governmental and civil society organizations (NGOs and CSOs), private sector actors, other United Nations entities, and the Governments of Sweden and Norway.

II. Results

I.) Narrative Reporting on Results

The JP RWEE employs a multi-track strategy with the aim of achieving short, medium, and long term results. In the short term, the focus is on enhancing production and access to income; in the medium term on increasing participation and leadership among rural women through capacity building and skills development; in the long term the programme works to promote gender responsive policy and legal environments for rural women's economic empowerment.

Women's groups form the programme's entry point and women's participation in the programme is selected based on criteria agreed with national governments and following baseline assessments. The groups consist of both the most vulnerable and poorest women who are often excluded from conventional economic empowerment programmes, along with women entrepreneurs already organised in Producer Organisations and cooperatives who have the potential to develop their businesses and contribute to the economic development of their communities. This double targeting enables the JP RWEE to work on 'empowerment accelerators' with women who have a basic level of skills and have organised themselves into groups, while also reaching the most vulnerable rural women who have been socially excluded and marginalised and denied access to basic services, resources and opportunities.

The programme continues to work in close partnership with local and national actors and is implemented, primarily through local implementing partners and local government, so helping to contribute to increased ownership and sustainability.

a. OUTCOME 1: Rural women have improved food and nutrition security

Outcome 1 focuses on increasing the productive potential of women smallholder farmers through facilitating their access to, and control over, productive resources and services critical to food security and nutrition, while strengthening capacities in enhanced agricultural production, harvesting and storage.

In 2020, despite the unprecedented circumstances of COVID-19, data collected from four countries¹² demonstrated a further average increase in agricultural production of 101.25 percent in comparison to the country baselines. The highest growth was reported in Nepal, with a 306 percent increase in vegetable production, including an average production of 949 kg per household. Guatemala recorded increases of 66.4 percent in maize production and 39 percent in bean production. In Niger there was a 66.45 percent increase in animal production and an average increase of 31 percent in vegetable production. Liberia reported a lower increase of 10 percent in rice production and five percent in cassava production, with achievement against targets being lower than planned due to inaccessibility and travel restrictions imposed as a response to COVID-19 in the targeted communities. The overall increases in production, despite the difficult context, were attributed to the strong transfer of knowledge in vegetable cultivation and livestock production, including training and ongoing guidance and accompaniment provided to ensure the practical application of acquired knowledge.

Positive results were also achieved in women's nutrition status¹³. In Nepal there was a 100 percent increase in vegetable consumption (both in quantity and frequency) from kitchen gardens, which resulted in 97 percent of women headed-households increasing their Food Consumption Score. In Niger, the individual Dietary Diversity Score¹⁴ of targeted households in one of the four *communes* targeted by the programme increased from 3.5 to 4.9. In Kyrgyzstan, 300 women improved the quality of household nutrition with fresh and organically grown vegetables, through increased access to high-quality seeds and the application of good practices in vegetable production, including tomato, cucumber, cabbage, carrot, broccoli and pepper.

Training was able to continue in a number of countries during the period of lockdown¹⁵, through the use of online training and monitoring platforms in order to ensure the continuation of capacity building and support for beneficiaries. In Kyrgyzstan, training for women in vegetable growing technologies continued through the online Zoom platform, the facilitation of online support and the establishment of a mobile phone 'WhatsApp' group available for 1716 beneficiaries (1666 women and 50 men), which shared practical teaching videos on the establishment of greenhouses and seed planting, resulting in an eventual successful harvest. Remote support was also provided to beneficiaries in Guatemala, Liberia, Nepal and Rwanda through online platforms and the use of mobile phones.

In Ethiopia, an impact assessment conducted by the Bureau of Livestock, Agriculture and Natural Resource Development Bureau (BoLARND), found that significant change was observed in the lives of women with regards to their food culture, nutrition, and food security through JP RWEE activities. Beneficiaries were found to have applied positive coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 crisis by planting backyard crops not traditionally used in the areas, such as potato which enables long term utilization and avoids the use of expensive inputs such as spices and other perishable materials.

Output 1.1 - Rural women have increased access to and control over resources, assets and services critical for their food and nutrition security.

¹² Guatemala, Liberia, Nepal, Niger

¹³ Data was not collected from Ethiopia or Rwanda due to COVID-19

¹⁴ The Dietary Diversity Score is a proxy indicator of household food access and food security. It measures the number of individual foods or food groups consumed over a seven-day recall period.

¹⁵ Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia

This output encompasses strategies and interventions to improve rural women's access to, and ownership of, resources that are critical for food security, including land, access to improved seeds and agricultural tools, capacity strengthening on climate smart agriculture techniques and farming technologies.

In 2020, 9,598 beneficiaries (8,864 women and 734 men) gained access to improved production techniques through the provision of an integrated set of interventions including training and on-site and on-farm technical assistance to 7,239 beneficiaries (6,326 women and 913 men). In Nepal, there was a focus on ensuring equitable access and control over resources through training and empowering women's cooperatives. As a direct result of the cooperatives increased knowledge, the Government of Nepal adopted a policy to accelerate the flow of agricultural inputs and support through registered cooperatives and there was a 44 percent increase in the number of rural women farmers groups in the cooperatives, from 16 groups in 2018/2019 to 23 groups in 2020. Women cooperatives are now able to access resources and support that was previously unavailable to them, and to increase their ability to ensure the food and nutrition security of their households.

A total of 9,330 beneficiaries (7,201 women and 2,129 men) participating in the JP RWEE also benefited from access to agricultural inputs and resources, such as high-quality seeds (333 women in Guatemala, 600 women in Kyrgyzstan, 341 women in Liberia, 120 women in Niger, and 323 women in Rwanda), marketing equipment (800 women in Nepal), plastic tunnel greenhouses (300 women in Kyrgyzstan), agro pastoral kits (3500 women in Niger), solar panels (100 women in Guatemala and 323 women in Rwanda), energy saving stoves (140 women in Guatemala), rainwater tanks (278 women in Rwanda) and shallow wells (accessible to 40 households in Nepal). In Rwanda, in order to improve irrigation for kitchen gardening, a total of 278 households (990 beneficiaries -781 women and 209 men) were trained in installing and maintaining simple roof rainwater harvesting systems. As a result, they now have sustainable access to water for vegetable cultivation within their homes, enabling greater home-grown production and improved access to a nutritious diet.

In Ethiopia, 512 beneficiaries (212 women and 300 men) were trained on climate smart agricultural inputs which contributed to the mainstreaming of climate change responses in the practices of agribusiness cooperatives. The provision of climate smart agricultural training was complemented with the establishment of a climate and gender responsive model communal site in the Oromia region, through which 102 women were supported to plant 3044 fruit trees in the designated sites. Women can now cultivate fruit trees for increased food security, dietary diversity and income opportunities, whilst the pilot site will provide further opportunity for replication led by the community and local government in climate and drought affected areas.

In 2020, the JP RWEE supported the development three communal market garden sites in Niger and 1,666 Kitchen Gardens in Rwanda. In Niger, 323 women accessed agricultural inputs consisting of 1,225 kg of vegetable seeds and equipment to establish their communal sites and received training in market gardening and the use of market garden products. In Rwanda, 1,989 people (1,661 women and 328 men) acquired knowledge on the propagation and grafting of fruit trees to produce productive seedlings for income-generating activities and nutrition. As a result, 23,429 plants (avocado and mango) were grafted and will be ready for plantation in early 2021, and 994 (830 women and 164 men) beneficiaries started their own nurseries to sell tree fruits in the community.

In Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan and Niger, the integration of participatory approaches and knowledge sharing on farming practices was facilitated for 1,333 beneficiaries (1,255 women and 108 men) through the utilization of the Farmer-to-Farmer methodology,¹⁶ Self-Help Groups and the

¹⁶ Farmer to Farmer approach is a method of extension and social communication for the rural development. It uses a series of participatory techniques, in which the farmer families are protagonist.

establishment of Farmer Field Schools¹⁷ (FFS). In Guatemala, the utilization of the Farmer-to-Farmer methodology engaged 857 women farmers to share and adopt practices using local resources, resulting in an increase in the production of broiler chickens, pigs and home gardens, the consumption and sale of which directly improved dietary diversity and increased incomes. In Niger, 11 FFS were created, engaging 314 people (234 women and 80 men) to benefit from knowledge exchanges in farming techniques including conservation techniques, composting, and the production and use of bio pesticides. In Kyrgyzstan, 300 members of the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) were able to increase their vegetable production through knowledge sharing experiences including exchange visits, resulting in the increase of vegetable production to 98.2 tons of vegetables, which accounted for 17.5% of all vegetables harvested in Naryn province in 2020¹⁸.

To increase the reach of interventions and enable wider awareness, a number of countries also included a training of trainer's (TOT) approach to enable the cascading of knowledge to other community members. As a result, 8,286 people (6,812 women, 591 men)¹⁹ received nutrition training or education, with COVID-19 awareness and prevention being integrated into all trainings. In Guatemala, the JP RWEE carried out awareness raising on key issues including sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, and the recovery of the local food culture for good nutrition, reaching 3,525 people (2,499 women 1026 men). Similarly, in Niger, a total of 197 leaders, including 169 women, were trained, and in turn trained 1,419 beneficiaries (1,050 women and 369 men) in awareness raising sessions including additional topics on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) and water, hygiene and sanitation.

In Rwanda, the JP RWEE provided standardized cooking kits to 19 cooperatives and facilitated the training of 316 community representatives and community health workers on using locally available food products, resulting in community demonstrations that illustrated the nutritional benefits of a balanced diet for cooking. Over 1,900 rural women were trained and received instruction in preparing nutritious meals from locally available products to support balanced diets among family members, including infant and young child feeding.

Output 1.2 - Rural women have greater capacity to enhance and control local food security reserves and their production

In 2020, activities held across JP RWEE countries supported 3,568 beneficiaries (3,120 women and 448 men) to access food processing plants²⁰; 4,375 beneficiaries (3,470 women and 905 men) were equipped with innovative food processing technologies²¹, such as agro-pastoral processing products; a further 1,702 beneficiaries (1,493 women and 209 men)²² accessed labour-saving technologies. In Ethiopia, 319 women gained access to milk processing plants and 353 women received milk processing equipment. Access to the plants and inputs was complemented with the provision of training on the usage and marketing of dairy products. Recipients of the technologies have been able to increase their productivity and incomes through effective time and labour use, as well as achieve improvements in dietary diversity and income opportunities.

In Liberia, 109 women smallholder farmers are accessing two community grain reserves (CGR) for rice and cassava value chain development. Women also highlighted that the rice stored in the CGRs was used to address food insecurity during the period of restrictions imposed as a response to COVID-19.

¹⁷ Farmer Field School (FFS) is an approach based on people-centred learning. Participatory methods are used to create an environment conducive to learning: the participants exchange knowledge and experience. Practical field exercises using direct observation, discussion and decision making encourage learning-by-doing.

¹⁸ <http://www.stat.kg/ru/statistics/download/operational/1330/>.

¹⁹ Ethiopia, Guatemala, Niger and Rwanda.

²⁰ Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Niger and Rwanda.

²¹ Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Niger and Rwanda.

²² Ethiopia, Liberia and Rwanda.

The CGRs have enabled women to reduce time spent on labour activities and the additional time saved has been used to undertake income-generating activities.

Training in post-harvest techniques was provided to 857 women in Guatemala, resulting in a subsequent 28.5 percent reduction in post-harvest losses. The women were able to increase their stocks of maize and beans, helping to offset the cost of purchasing grains and thus increasing household cash savings. In Niger, the JP RWEE facilitated the installation of multifunctional platforms and water standpipes benefitting 5,000 beneficiaries (3500 women and 1500 men) and trained 40 beneficiaries (20 women and 20 men) on the maintenance of the equipment to ensure sustainability.

In Ethiopia, 75 women were assisted to obtain land for their cooperative which has been developed to build a shade to be used for a beef fattening business and which has also provided an opportunity for cooperative members to engage in income diversification, including through the cultivation and sale of fruits and vegetables. In Liberia, 22 hectares of community lowland farm was secured which was used for staple food crop production through the provision of 27 Mt. of assorted food commodities (rice, pulses and oil) to four women's cooperatives. Also in Liberia, 491 people (400 women and 91 men) have been supported to access seven innovative food processing units which enable the use of motorized cassava graters for increased control over community reserves and for adding value to cassava production. These commodities also provided a means of income generation for the women accessing the grain reserves who were affected by the impact of COVID-19. Finally, maize drying sheds were provided to three cooperatives in Rwanda to strengthen their post-harvest handling and to preserve the quality of the maize and mitigate post-harvest losses.

b. OUTCOME 2: Rural women have increased income to secure their livelihoods and create wealth

This outcome area focuses on creating, supporting and developing rural women-led enterprises, supporting women's roles along value chains, enhancing their income opportunities and promoting their linkages to high value markets. Over the course of the past twelve months, data collected from six countries²³ show that a total of US\$539,650 was generated from sales at the individual and group levels, reaching a cumulative aggregate amount over the last three years of US\$ 2.59 million.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, there were significant increases in income brought about through the sale of produce across six countries²⁴. In Nepal, 2,384 women generated a total of US\$ 252,195 linked to increased production of vegetables and the ability to sell surplus produce.²⁵ In Guatemala, 1,041 people (872 women and 169 men) generated a total of USD\$ 123,544 from farm and kitchen garden sales and a further 333 women increased their sales by 48 percent (earning approximately \$112.00 per month through sales of farm and kitchen garden products) of corn, beans, vegetables, eggs, and flour. In Rwanda, a total of 12 cooperatives with 1,181 members (927 women and 254 men) generated a total income of US\$ 62,191. In Liberia, ten women-owned non-agriculture small businesses with 175 women members generated USD\$ 27,500 (LD\$ 4,400,000) from the sale of non-agriculture products including locally produced masks and liquid soap to be used for COVID-19 prevention, with support from the JP RWEE and in partnership with UNAIDS. In Ethiopia, six cooperatives with 860 members generated USD\$ 24,512 as a result of having increased market access.

Improving women's access and control over financial assets and credit has been a key component of the JP RWEE's support to enhance rural women's entrepreneurial capacities and market competitiveness. In 2020, 212 groups, with 5,149 women members in Village Saving and Loans

²³ Data not available from Niger

²⁴ Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal and Rwanda - data not yet available for Niger

²⁵ The vegetables consisted of tomato, chili, cauliflower, radish, onion, carrot, broadleaf mustard, cabbage, beans, lady's finger, sponge gourd, bitter gourd, bottle gourd, cucumber, amaranths and the high-yielding wheat variety of *banganga*.

Associations and Rural Saving and Credit Cooperatives have saved a combined sum of US\$ 367,939²⁶. In Guatemala, 46 groups with 1,114 women members, have saved a total of \$212,437 which has enabled them to increase the working capital of their enterprises and to purchase fertilizers, pigs and broiler chickens. In Liberia, 1,175 women are accessing sustainable rural financial services through the 32 existing and 16 newly established Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), which has provided US\$ 58,750 in rural credit. In Nepal, 122 rural women's groups accumulated US\$ 96,752, which was accessed by 2,860 direct beneficiaries through a revolving fund scheme.

Output 2.1 - Rural women have enhanced entrepreneurship skills and value chains to access markets for their products

Capacity strengthening is one of the core programme approaches of the JP RWEE and in 2020, 6,452 participants²⁷ expanded their entrepreneurship skills through a comprehensive set of interventions including the provision of trainings in marketing, financial literacy, business management, business proposal development and the value chain approach. For example, in Kyrgyzstan and Liberia, 1,318 people (1309 women and nine men) have increased their knowledge in specialized business development and financial literacy. Women recipients of the training have gained a new sense of confidence through the ability to read, write and use mobile phones and as a direct result, have been able to transform their market ventures into profitable businesses.

"I really enjoyed the financial literacy training. Since I did not study anywhere after the end of the ninth grade, the concept of investing never crossed my mind. Now, you can think about where we can invest our accumulated funds – in my case, for the education of my son and for my business idea to start a sewing production business of national clothing". – JP RWEE Participant, Kyrgyzstan

Strategies to create, develop and promote market linkages were also used in order to increase women's access to high value markets, value chains and potential opportunities. In Ethiopia, cooperative members gained improved market access as a result of their participation in national exhibitions and bazaars, resulting in 48 people (44 women and 4 men) being able to generate income, and develop networks outside of their local area, with much greater market potential. Further efforts were applied to increase women's cooperative access to markets through market training including developing buyer and linkage mechanisms and workshops attended by local vendors, retailers, and wholesalers. As a result, six cooperatives generated USD\$ 24,512.

Likewise, in Rwanda, twelve cooperatives with 1,181 members (927 women and 254 men) generated a total income of US\$ 62,191 through newly established linkages to markets. The increased productivity, income and food security contributed to coping with the socio-economic challenges of COVID-19 at the household level and within the cooperatives. In Nepal, 2,003 rural women from 82 rural women's cooperatives have enhanced entrepreneurship skills and are engaged in value chains to access markets for their products. Out of 122 rural women's groups, 82 are engaged in commercial vegetable production and 957 members received equipment to be used to ensure safe transportation of products to the market.

In Guatemala, 333 women were supported in the development of three business models for poultry, tilapia, and vegetable production. The JP RWEE also conducted three market studies for these products to enable women to calculate production costs, identify market segments, approach potential formal markets and identify equipment and technologies to improve the productivity of their products. A further 49 women received technical assistance in the construction of a flour processing plant and attended training in flour marketing and business establishment to set up a flour enterprise.

²⁶ Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal and Rwanda – No data available in Niger.

²⁷ All countries.

In Nepal, the JP RWEE is in the process of facilitating the establishment of a long-term contract between 56 primary schools and women's farmers' cooperatives to supply the required agricultural products for nutritious meals for students through the government's Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) pilot²⁸). Training on the production of nutritious school meals was provided to 140 women. A total of 82 school officials were also trained on the modality of HGSFP. To facilitate the process, the JP RWEE has supported production mapping in the respective communities which engaged 140 participants (95 women and 45 men), enabling women to exercise leadership in local value chain management while assessing the supply deficit and supply-chain problems. Upon completion of the activity by March 2021, the implementation of HGSFP will provide a nutritionally balanced midday meal to approximately 10,774 students and link 950 rural women to local markets.

In Liberia, the JP RWEE conducted a value chain assessment for rice and vegetables across targeted communities. Some key findings that informed the programme included: the advantages of working with rice farmers through groups or associations and public-private partnerships; the importance of selecting the correct rice varieties that have the necessary yield, disease resistance, and length of growing season characteristics desired by women smallholder farmers; the taste characteristics sought by rice consumers, and ways in which to create the necessary environment to develop the cassava value chain.

Output 2.2 - Rural women have increased access to decent wage employment opportunities

Activities related to Output 2.2 focus on removing structural barriers to women's engagement in economic activities through interventions including the provision of technology for increased production and the establishment of revolving funds for access to capital.

Data available from participating countries²⁹ indicates that during 2020, a total of 6,409 rural women initiated and/or strengthened self-employment / income-generating activities in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. In Liberia, 399 rural community women and 88 young rural women and adolescent girls living with HIV/AIDS were supported in business development and received business start-up capital to initiate small businesses (e.g. tailoring, baking, and hairdressing shops) for income generation, 100 percent of whom are now self-employed and successfully managing their respective shops. Liberia's private sector partnership with Orange Mobile also continued, enabling 50 women to access employment opportunities as mobile money agents, operating 50 mobile money stations in three counties. These women provided mobile money transaction services to over 15,062 customers.

In Niger, 293 women from 43 cooperatives developed business plans and bolstered their micro enterprises through the provision of economic and financial trainings. As part of this activity, discussions within the Dimitra Clubs have led to the creation of community-based social enterprises by young women. A mechanism was created to accompany the groups of young women who wanted to re-energise their existing small businesses and start developing business plans. In Ethiopia, 28 beneficiaries (23 women and 5 men) attended exchange visits led by the JP RWEE in an effort to encourage the sharing of best practices between cooperatives on their access to financial services. In Nepal, 135 women have already received short-term wage employment through cash-assistance-for-assets activities for the construction of two market outlets. They earned a monthly average income of NPR 8,500 (US\$ 74.7), as per the government's local wage rate in both districts. An additional 87 rural

²⁸ This is being piloted under the government's National School Meals Programme (NSMP), a national programme being implemented in 43 districts of Nepal, although it is not implemented through the HGSF approach in most areas meaning that students are not always provided with balanced nutrition through their food ration. Through the HGSF, schools buy farmers' products to provide cooked, nutritionally balanced food, based on proper dietary menu planning.

²⁹ All countries

women were provided with wage employment opportunities for the construction of a further two agro-product collection centres.

c. OUTCOME 3: Rural women have enhanced leadership and participation in their communities and in rural institutions, and in shaping laws, policies and programmes.

Activities under this outcome promote women's active participation and leadership in decision-making bodies, households, Producer Organizations (POs) and the wider community. This includes women's representation in rural councils, land committees, leadership of POs, and achieving a more equal role in intra-household decision making. Key to this is the engagement of men in order to advance the social and political inclusion and recognition of women in all spheres of rural life. The most significant progress made under this output was observed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in traditional social norms reported during the community response to the crisis, whereby women played a central role in the community and household during the response, and were also able to successfully engage with decisions makers. Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index³⁰ (WEAI) endline surveys were initiated in three countries³¹ towards the end of 2020 and the findings, which will be available in 2021, will capture the full extent of women's empowerment achieved through the programme.

The election of women to local councils is one of the means used to achieve the increased participation of women in decision making and leadership, and to ensure the inclusion of identified needs of women and girls in rural development planning. In Kyrgyzstan, planned local elections were postponed to 2021 due to political instability. The JP RWEE is mentoring 18 women who are standing for election, and promoting awareness in the community on women electoral candidates and their ability to represent communities in local governance. In Guatemala, five women hold elected positions in local municipalities.

The participation of 1,107 women in land committees continued in Liberia, although plans to open up membership to additional women were delayed as a result of the pandemic. Land committees seek to ensure fair and equitable access to, and ownership of, land for both men and women, thereby enabling women to have access to resources and opportunities from which they have previously been excluded, including engaging in agriculture as a commercial activity and accessing formal credit.

Women's leadership of local organisations has been promoted as a strategy throughout the implementation of the JP RWEE and is now well established in all countries. In Kyrgyzstan, all 4 of the Producer Organisations which have been formed under the JP RWEE are led by women. In Niger, 131 out of 167 (78%) of POs are led by rural women. In Nepal, a total of 1,065 women out of 1,638 (65%) are in leadership positions in cooperatives, whilst 552 out of 3,002 rural women are in leadership positions within POs. In Ethiopia, 80% of women in the JP RWEE are leading their agro business cooperatives, including a number of women who have positions in the *kebele* (sub district) administration.

Output 3.1 Rural women, including young women, have enhanced confidence and leadership skills to participate in local governance

The enhancement of women's confidence and leadership is a strategy underlying multiple interventions within the actions of the programme. With regards to participation in local governance, in Kyrgyzstan, in collaboration with UN Women's wider 'Election Project' programme, the JP RWEE is

³⁰ The WEAI is an innovative tool to measure women's empowerment and inclusion in the agricultural sector. It is composed of two sub-indices: one measures women's empowerment across five domains in agriculture, and the other measures gender parity in empowerment within the household.

³¹ Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Niger

supporting the increased participation of women in local governance by working directly with a number of women to support them to stand for local council elections. A total of 36 rural women candidates put themselves forward to stand for election in local council elections. Eighteen of these women chose to participate in training, coaching and mentoring on topics including political representation, local governance and ICT in order that they have the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to run for election and represent their communities on local councils. A video on the 30% gender quota in local elections was produced by a JP RWEE media expert at the request of, and in close collaboration with, the national Central Election Committee and was broadcast on television during the national October elections. The video will be widely used during the campaign for the local elections in April 2021.

In Guatemala, support was provided to the directors of municipal women's offices in three municipalities in the analysis of results and achievements and the preparation of annual operating plans. Training was also provided to 87 women leaders on the topics of women's participation at the community level, the importance of their participation in Community Development Councils (COCODES), economic autonomy and women's human rights. In addition, a total of 185 women took part in local development decision making processes with 120 members of community development councils, ensuring adequate representation of women and providing space to articulate the needs and priorities of women and girls, as well as sensitising local councils in the importance of women's participation in these structures.

In Nepal, 1,180 women engaged directly in dialogue with government officials in local development planning processes, ensuring that their needs were taken into account, including on issues such as irrigation schemes, provision of agricultural inputs and COVID-19 response.

Under this output, activities are also carried out for enhancing the self-confidence and leadership of women through education and training. A total of 1694 (1674 women and 20 men) in Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan and Rwanda, received training through their cooperative/group participation which strengthened their leadership, assertiveness and management skills. In Niger, a total of 1,204 girls received secondary school scholarships and, despite a few months of school closure due to the lockdown, were able to complete the majority of the school year and remain in formal education.

Output 3.2: Rural women have greater organizational capacities to form, sustain and participate in POs, cooperatives and unions.

As outlined above, women's groups represent the entry point for activities in the JP RWEE, providing women with access to collective resources and opportunities, which were previously inaccessible for the majority of women involved in the programme. The opportunities provided by group membership are further strengthened in the programme through the formalization of women's groups. This enables access to a greater range and level of services and opportunities, such as formal credit and government extension services, as well as access to markets and income generation opportunities.

In 2020 in Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, and Rwanda, a total of 1,588 people (1,348 women and 340 men) were formalized into 21 formally registered cooperatives or POs, in addition to those groups that had been formalized in previous years.

In Kyrgyzstan and Niger, 9 POs have enhanced their organizational capacities to form, sustain and participate in POs. In Kyrgyzstan, organisational capacity building including reviewing the organizational structures of the 4 POs, including management control systems and streamlining regulations on the use of funds through officially approved protocols agreed by all members. Furthermore, 50 members of 65 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the country have gained knowledge on the functioning of cooperatives and NGOs, and 25 leaders and activists of SHGs have enhanced their

capacities on cooperative management, including through the development and implementation of six business plans.

A number of activities in other countries were delayed by COVID-19 and will be reported on at the final report stage.

Output 3.3 Rural women including young women have increased capacity to engage in and influence relevant policy forums at national and regional levels.

Due to the change in government priorities caused by the pandemic in 2020, a number of planned dialogues and inputs into relevant policy forums were postponed until 2021. For example, in Liberia, three national dialogues planned on agriculture, rural development and land were rescheduled, although three strategic dialogues were held on land rights networking between informal women's groups and formal organisations.

In Kyrgyzstan, which has strong telecommunication networks countrywide, online dialogues and policy lobbying activities were organized in place of the in-person forums originally planned. Two online dialogues were held and involved the participation of 85 rural women representing local women groups, local *keneshes* (councils), communities, civil society, and business organizations. Discussions were held on the role of rural women in local economies and socio-political development, including the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The dialogues also considered ways to increase the number of women running for elections.

At the district level in Ethiopia, women engaged with local administrative leaders with regards to the promotion of a green economy, in line with national policy, through a climate smart village initiative taking place under the JP RWEE. Shared learning was carried out between cooperatives and included the participation of local authorities, with participants visiting various CSA activities and other initiatives, including a biogas plant. The visit enhanced the capacity of business cooperative leaders and members in managing a joint business, whilst also promoting knowledge on the green economy. District officials and administrators reported that they regard the climate smart village as an excellent replicable model for climate smart agriculture activities in similar drought prone areas and will incorporate it into future local development plans.

Output 3.4: Rural women, including young women have enhanced awareness on their rights in a more supportive community/local environment.

A total of 3,830 women and family members, including men, participated in a number of activities as part of the programme's approach to increase awareness around gender equality and women's rights in Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda. Innovative methodologies aimed at transforming social norms and breaking down entrenched barriers to gender equality include Dimitra community listening clubs, the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) and community conversations.

In Niger, the commemoration of International Rural Women's Day (IRWD), which is an activity under the government's five-year action plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for Women's Empowerment, was held with a focus on political participation and decision-making of rural women, ahead of the general elections planned in Niger for late 2020.

In Liberia, 615 women leaders at the county level are leading women's rights advocacy efforts in the management of land for agriculture. Two forums were held at county level on women's land rights referencing the gender-responsive implementation of the Land Rights Act. Women, including individual women and women's civil society, are accessing information on their land rights from local level County Service Centres. There is increased knowledge on land rights, as witnessed by women

successfully advocating to local government for the respect of women's rights in the community management of land.

A total of 1720 women in Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Rwanda were trained on the GALS³² methodology in 2020, in addition to those already involved in GALS from the previous year. These women are now sharing the GALS tools and their learnings with their families and group members, mapping out visions together and planning for the future. In addition, previously trained GALS champions have been able to disseminate the GALS methodology in their wider communities.

GALS assessments, aimed at assessing impact and effectiveness of the GALS component of the programme, were started in Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan and Nepal, the findings of which will be available in 2021. In Kyrgyzstan, emerging findings reveal that households (encompassing 2059 JP RWEE women) have started practicing better family relations, with women getting more support and respect from other family members, unfair workload distribution being redistributed and women having more access to decision making and resource distribution. Women's increased income has resulted in them being able to contribute to the household budget, and their role as women in general has been given greater value and recognition within the household, which in turn has enhanced their confidence.

In Nepal, through the GALS component of the programme, transformative change was observed amongst women at the household level, including reducing family expenses through household budgeting, and greater involvement of women in economic activities and household planning. GALS champions worked as volunteers to disseminate the GALS methodology in the community, as well as to raise public awareness about COVID-19, and help vulnerable women during the lockdown period.

Community radio was also used as an important tool in Nepal and Niger to raise awareness and promote women's rights. In Nepal, a 15 episode radio series on women's rights was started, with 8 episodes being aired, reaching an audience of approximately 229,548 population in two districts.³³ The live radio programmes were held between rural women and locally elected leaders, in which the women were able to raise issues and receive direct responses from officials, including commitments and agreements on issues such as the provision of irrigation and reducing corruption in local judicial committees. In Niger, Dimitra clubs also strengthened collaboration with community radio stations, using them to enable community members to share good practices and experiences with community members beyond Dimitra club members. This proved to be particularly important in raising awareness around COVID-19.

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

Under outcome 4, programme strategies are targeted at the level of policy development and reform, in order to ensure that the necessary legislative and policy environment is in place to support gender equality and the economic empowerment of rural women. This involves working with governments, parliamentarians and other key stakeholders to ensure gender responsive policies and strategies are developed including in relation to land rights, social protection, services and infrastructure.

Output 4.1: Policy makers and parliamentarians have enhanced capacities to effectively mainstream gender into land, food, agriculture, nutrition and rural employment policies, laws, and budgets.

³²GALS is a community-led empowerment methodology that encourages gender-transformative changes and equitable gender relations at the household level by challenging discriminatory social norms, attitudes and behaviours.

³³ The radio reach has been calculated based on radio listenership findings from the National Media Survey 2019, which shows that 22 per cent of the population 16 years and above in Province 2 have daily access to radio.

In Ethiopia, the Women, Children and Youth Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture was supported to develop a draft standardized gender inclusive CSA training manual, including a Training of Trainers (TOT). Once approved, the gender training manual will serve as a training tool for experts within the different directorates of the Ministry, in order to help them mainstream gender at the national level, and also to cascade trainings to both the district levels and to extension workers at the grass roots community level.

In Guatemala, the National Coalition for the Economic Empowerment of Women was signed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA), the Ministry of the Economy (MINECO), the Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM), the National Secretariat for Science and Technology (SENACYT), and the Vice-Presidency of the Republic. This is a multisectoral alliance that constitutes part of the JP RWEE framework in the country and seeks to support women to increase their livelihoods through business, entrepreneurship and employment, and to achieve financial inclusion and access to credit for women's entrepreneurship as a mechanism to reduce poverty. One positive result of the alliance is the creation of the Enlaces program³⁴ which seeks to create opportunities to work together to promote shared prosperity that is profitable, socially responsible and beneficial to communities and the business sector. Support was also provided to the Office of the Vice President of the Republic to incorporate a gender perspective into the loans programme created in response to COVID-19 and implemented by the National Council for Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises.

In Liberia, two forums were held at county level on women's land rights. However, capacity building activities with policy makers and parliamentarians were postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions on meetings. In Nepal, 63 government officials and elected leaders (27 women and 36 men) attended a workshop on gender responsive planning and budgeting aimed at ensuring the meaningful participation of women in the local level planning process. Post training evaluation showed a significant increase in practical understanding of applying gender responsive planning and budgeting. A thorough analysis of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) strategy within the Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS) was also conducted in 2020, in view of the country's change to a federal system. The findings related to rural women farmers and agriculture will be used to inform the design of JP RWEE policy dialogues with local government aimed at creating a gender-responsive policy environment for rural women farmers.

Output 4.2: Greater availability of tools and data to track progress in the economic empowerment of rural women

Under this output, the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) is piloted by participating JP RWEE countries. During 2020, the WEAI endline process was started in three countries – Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Niger. As a result of devastating hurricanes in November, the survey was postponed in Guatemala until 2021. The WEAI was a key part of the JP RWEE programme design and is used to measure women's empowerment across five domains in agriculture and gender parity in empowerment within the household, including women's empowerment relative to men's. The use of the index also supports the work of agriculture ministries by providing evidence-based studies to inform policy development. Full results of the endline will be available in 2021 and will be used to inform future programming. In Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Niger, in-depth assessments of the impact of the GALS and, in Kyrgyzstan, the BALI methodologies, were also started. The qualitative findings will complement the WEAI findings, and will be available in 2021.

In Liberia, the joint programme contributed to a rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on women, girls, children, and their communities with UNICEF, UNFPA, and UN OHCHR. A gender

³⁴ (<https://programaenlaces.org/>)

analysis of Liberia's COVID-19 Response Plan, COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund and budget allocations and expenditure was also conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning with support from the JP RWEE. As the pandemic continues, the analysis is assisting in informing policy actors and budget drafters to give more consideration to addressing gender issues during the response.

In 2020, the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture started the revision of its agricultural policy 'Agriculture and Rural Development'. The analysis showed that, whilst gender did get some consideration in the policy's thematic areas it was not considered as a standalone technical area, and that, as a result, it was found that the mainstreaming of gender in all the technical areas was less effective than expected. A JP RWEE gender expert is part of the team including gender experts from MoA, UN Women, Addis Ababa University, and the Agriculture Transformation Agency (ATA) to develop a stand-alone gender component in the policy document. Also in Ethiopia, in collaboration with the Women, Children and Youth Directorate (WCYD) of the MoA, the JP RWEE published a rapid assessment and policy brief on Gender and Agricultural Mechanization which detailed the need for enhanced gender responsiveness in agriculture mechanization policies, as well as to inform stakeholder programming in this sector. A bibliography of '*Gender and Land Issues in Ethiopia*'³⁵ was also compiled by the JP RWEE and is available on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture. The purpose of the published bibliography is to make readily available and accessible the various studies, policies and legislations dealing with gender issues in rural land administration in Ethiopia. The bibliography was developed in response to an identified information gap and will provide scholars and land experts access to valuable studies and research, and enable them to contribute to improved land administration practices in Ethiopia through evidenced based lobbying with policy makers.

In Rwanda, a study led by the JP RWEE in collaboration with the local partner the ICCO Cooperation in Rwanda, analysed existing labour-saving technologies in agriculture for small scale women farmers, identified gaps and factors influencing women's time constraints and heavy work in the agriculture sector, and proposed possible interventions and recommendations for gender sensitive programming. The study found that most rural women are still using rudimentary tools for ploughing and planting. Other equipment is available but not accessible to women and is used by men, such as large irrigation equipment, greenhouses, and tractors. Milling machines and drip irrigation kits are also available in some places but are not easily accessed by women. Cultural issues linked with decision making at household level, equipment design, low income and limited purchasing power, and limited access to information and education, are some of the reasons which prevent women from accessing labour saving technologies. One of the study's recommendations states that investment is needed across all actors to ensure that women have access to labour-saving technologies which also include resilience to climate change. Modification of existing equipment to enable use by women (e.g. smaller sprayers, simple irrigation machines etc.) is also recommended. Dissemination of the findings will be carried out in 2021.

Output 4.3 An enabling environment is promoted to reflect rural women's priorities in regional policy processes

In collaboration with the Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA), the JP RWEE in Ethiopia established the '*Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Research Dissemination Forum*'. The forum is planned as a continuous platform for the presentation of research findings in which academics, researchers, practitioners and institutions can share and discuss findings, and then use these evidence-based findings to advocate and influence policies, legislations and decision making in relation to GE and WEE. The first forum was held in late 2020 on the topic of utilization of the media

³⁵ ([Home - Ministry of Agriculture \(moa.gov.et\)](http://moa.gov.et)).

by women in rural areas. Also in Ethiopia, four meetings were held under the Ethiopian Women's Land Rights Task Force on laws and policies in the agriculture sector that affect the rights of women.

Through the Ethiopian Gender Equality Network in Agriculture (EGENA), a monthly research dissemination virtual platform was established by the JP RWEE with the Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) and the MOA. The forum is a platform to enhance coordination and information/knowledge sharing for gender mainstreaming within agriculture by participating organizations, as well as enabling the joint identification of advocacy and policy issues.

In commemoration of International Rural Women's Day, the JP RWEE organized a virtual meeting with the theme, '*The Impact of COVID-19 on Ethiopian Rural Women, experiences, coping strategies and the way forward*'. The main aim of the forum was to discuss and share information about the impact of COVID-19 on rural women between institutions, researchers and practitioners, and to learn about how they were coping with the challenges.

In Kyrgyzstan, the JP RWEE, through synergies with other UN Women projects and in partnership with the UN Gender Theme Group (UNGTG), has supported the Ministry of Labour and Social Development in launching the national process on the development of a new Gender Equality Strategy (GES) for the period 2021 - 2030. A key state policy document, GES frames State commitments towards gender equality in all spheres of life, including on WEE. The process commenced in late November 2020 and will continue in 2021, ensuring genuine participation of rural women leaders and activists in the GES development process. More than 80 JP RWEE women participated in a dialogue on the role of rural women in local economies and socio-political development, in particular during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, by using a discussion platform provided by JP RWEE partners.

Recommendations identified to be included in the National Gender Equality Strategy (GES) 2021-2030 included: expanding access of rural women to information, financial resources, ICT and professional opportunities; improving financial literacy for increased market access; developing a strategy to support women entrepreneurs at the level of the Ministry of Agriculture; raising awareness about the importance of women's participation in politics, organizing activities to involve rural women in public life, developing programs at the State level to increase women's political participation, and involving women in COVID-19 response strategies. The recommendations were presented to the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on GES development.

e. Delays in implementation, challenges, lessons learned & best practices

Challenges

The reporting year was characterised by multiple challenges of an external nature, caused largely by the outbreak of the global pandemic, which had a significant impact on the implementation of the JP RWEE. Whilst the extent of the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) varied from country to country, all seven participating countries experienced lockdowns and restrictions to movements which impacted on national and local economies, and on the lives and livelihoods of those in the targeted communities, as well as affecting programme operations. Beneficiary communities were impacted on several fronts, including adverse effects on food and nutrition security, as well as income generation and livelihoods. There was reduced access to local markets, with minimal operating hours in place and, in some instances, markets were completely closed. Limitations on the number of people gathering together also severely affected the ability of the programme to operate as planned, given the centrality of capacity building, training, meetings and group activities to the programme.

The increasingly harsh effects of climate change were an added challenge in a number of countries, serving to compound the difficulties caused by COVID-19. In Niger, severe flooding impacted the programme area in July, resulting in destruction of agricultural land, and the loss of homes and livestock. In Ethiopia, the JP RWEE regions of implementation, Afar and Oromia, suffered the most

destructive infestation of locusts for 25 years. The infestation lasted for many months and destroyed thousands of tons of crops. It impacted significant numbers of JP RWEE beneficiaries as it destroyed grazing land and harvests, leading to crop and livestock losses, particularly in the Afar region. Both regions also experienced flooding as a result of a prolonged rainy season, with the main river overflowing and causing displacement, loss of crops and livestock. In Guatemala, a devastating hurricane in November caused catastrophic damage to land, completely submerging crops and creating landslides which blocked off access to the programme area for a period of time. In Kyrgyzstan, a prolonged winter led to loss of crops for JP RWEE beneficiaries, although subsequent replanting resulted in a successful harvest. Liberia also experienced unusually heavy rainfall during the rainy season.

From an operational perspective, the COVID-19 restrictions to movement and gatherings meant that activities were unable to take place as planned, leading to a significant number of activities being postponed. Revisions to priorities on the part of national and local government, in order to enable the required focus on the COVID-19 response, also had an impact on the programme, resulting in those activities closely involving government, such as training and policy work, being further delayed. With the easing of restrictions, activities gradually restarted, although limitations on the number of people allowed to meet together continued to affect the programme in all countries, with workshops, meetings, trainings, field visits, and consultations with beneficiaries and stakeholders having to be adapted accordingly. All activities, once resumed, were implemented in full compliance with national guidelines on COVID-19 prevention.

Coordination was also more challenging giving that physical meetings between the participating agencies, implementing partners and government representatives were unable to take place. This was replaced with online meetings which, whilst enabling coordination to continue, did present challenges at times, particularly where internet connectivity was unreliable (e.g. Niger, Liberia, Ethiopia).

Lessons Learned

Given the challenges outlined above, the principal learning across all JP RWEE participating countries was the need to ensure a resilience lens is applied to programming in the future, in order to enable beneficiaries to withstand external shocks to the fullest extent possible. The need to build disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness into future programme design is a further consideration. However, despite the unprecedented shocks suffered by beneficiary communities across the JP RWEE, a number of positive and valuable learnings were generated during this period, and, most significantly, there is evidence of resilience having been built amongst beneficiaries, despite it not having been an intended outcome of the programme.

Resilience through Savings and Lending Groups – savings and lendings groups proved to be a critical mechanism in enabling women to withstand the shocks to their livelihoods caused by the pandemic. This was evidenced across all participating countries. The importance of promoting a savings culture was clear as most beneficiaries were able to withstand the challenges of COVID-19 through the use of their savings, which helped them withstand the reduction to income caused by the lack of access to markets and income generation opportunities. Prior to participating in the programme, women group members in Ethiopia and Rwanda had not practiced a savings culture, but their membership of the cooperatives led to real change in this regard. Group members were able to buy food and other essential items, sustaining their families and withstanding the crisis until the situation eased and opportunities to earn income were revitalised.

Resilience through Income Diversification - programme interventions aimed at income diversification also enabled beneficiaries to draw on a wider number of sources of potential income opportunities at a time when levels of income from a single income source were reduced. In Niger and Ethiopia, it was

evident that the diversification of income sources, including horticulture, farming, fattening, small ruminants breeding, by women traditionally only economically active through a single source of production, helped to build their resilience and enable them to continue to generate income and sustain their livelihoods. Programme teams also reported that women group members had reported developing confidence in managing difficult situations within their business and family.

Use of ICT in programming - the need to adapt to online mechanisms for programme implementation also served to highlight the gap in digital skills and access for rural women. For example, the limited ICT network in Ethiopia meant that it was not possible to transfer to a digital modality of programme delivery for beneficiaries. In Nepal, the programme team identified that the digital skills gap highlighted the need for the establishment of a digital learning community centre in the targeted communities, incorporating activities on enhancing basic digital literacy for rural women where the required infrastructures exist. This would help promote the further empowerment of rural women for their engagement with local government and would also provide stronger linkages of their products to markets, as well as foster their overall growth as individuals, leaders and entrepreneurs. However, there were also positive learnings in adapting to the use of ICT in programming. In Rwanda, for example, women started using mobile money services within their savings and lendings groups as a response to the restrictions in movement, and this is now continuing as an established practice, giving greater flexibility and ease of services to women in their daily life and business activities. Acquiring new skills in digital literacy and mobile banking, has increased the competences and organizational capacities of women's groups to lead and actively participate in more social and economic activities.

Using Kitchen Gardens to Sustain Household Nutrition During Crisis Periods - kitchen gardens established at the household level in a number of countries³⁶ proved to be an invaluable source of food when access to markets was restricted and household incomes declined. Fruit and vegetables produced by women in their kitchen gardens replaced the need to purchase food at markets, ensured that the women and their families continued to benefit from a nutritious diet, and, in places where COVID-19 transmission was taking place in the community, also reduced exposure to the virus.

Women's Leadership and Participation - in all participating countries, including in communities with deeply entrenched discriminatory social norms, such as JP RWEE programme areas in Nepal and Niger, there was evidence of increased participation and leadership by women in the COVID-19 response. Women played a central role in disseminating information and awareness around the spread of the virus, they acted as role models for positive behaviour in the prevention of COVID-19, led community response efforts, including aid distribution, and perhaps most significantly, they proactively advocated with local authorities and decision makers for the inclusion of women in planning and response measures. This represents significant progress in changing social norms.

Household Social Norms Change - a further learning related to the impact of social norm change was observed at the household level, which can be attributed to gender transformative approaches used in the programme, such as the household GALS methodology. As a result of the skills learned through GALS, couples were able to enact mitigation strategies for household budgeting, to take decisions together as a result of improved communication, and to share household roles and responsibilities more equally during the pandemic. In Rwanda, for example, male spouses reported taking on a much more involved role in parenting and sensitizing other households on household harmony during the lockdown, particularly with regards to the prevention of domestic violence.

Selected Good Practices

³⁶ Guatemala, Liberia, Niger

A number of selected good practices are highlighted as follows:

Integration of Basic Hygiene Practices in Ethiopia - in Ethiopia, the JP RWEE works in communities with high rates of communicable disease linked to poor hygiene and sanitation. During the pandemic, basic protective measures, principally around hand washing, have been put in place to prevent the spread of the virus, consisting mainly of setting up portable hand washing stations with water and soap at meetings and gatherings, and carrying out simple key messaging. Beneficiaries have given feedback that basic hygiene practices were not previously observed, and that it would be beneficial if the practice could be continued and integrated into all activities going forward, given the prevalence of communicable disease in the target communities, and their link to poor nutrition.

Product Diversification within Microenterprises - the ability to adapt businesses through product diversification in response to sudden changes in context and circumstances is an important strategy for resilience and surviving economic shocks. In Guatemala and Kyrgyzstan, women's groups, using the knowledge and skills acquired through the programme, were able to adapt their core business to produce products that were in increasing demand due to the pandemic. A group of women weavers in Guatemala used scraps of left over fabric to produce masks, selling them within the local community. Another women's group were able to adapt their business from shampoo to antibacterial hand soap production, using natural plants, to generate income, which responded to a huge increase in demand on the local market.

Increasing Digital Access for Rural Women - at the onset of the pandemic, the JP RWEE team in Kyrgyzstan reacted quickly to the change in modality of programme implementation and used the opportunity to increase the digital skills of beneficiaries and implementing local government staff. Taking advantage of the widespread internet availability and access to smart phones in the country, a month long training was organised for 80 participants, which subsequently enabled a successful switch to online implementation for trainings, consultations and meetings. Planned trainings went ahead through established internet platforms and WhatsApp groups were used for discussions between women, including on the evolving situation and ways to address the emerging challenges. For newly established Self-Help Groups, weekly meetings were carried out online. Furthermore, women were able to apply their newly acquired IT skills and use them in helping to make efficient and effective business decisions and plans. For example, one women's Producer Organisation initiated an online survey of members to identify how many hours a day they spent baking bread. As a result of the findings they started an internal bakery service to make bread for the women and reduce the time they were spending on this task at home. This proved to be very successful and has led to the women making plans to extend the business into the wider community.

Using Community Radio as an Effective Tool for Community Level Communication in Nepal - in Nepal, taking into account the limited internet access amongst beneficiaries, the programme used community radio to adapt its implementation modality. Simple radio devices were distributed to 1,059 women, and training and awareness raising that had been planned to be held through workshops was transferred to community radio. Radio programming on topics related to women's empowerment, gender equality and social inclusion were broadcast, and interactive sessions were held through the radio programmes between women and local officials in which they were able to ask questions, raise concerns and request responses from local government. This was shown to help women develop assertiveness and confidence in interacting with local officials, articulate their concerns and needs and expect responses and action from those in authority. Improved attitudes and understanding of issues affecting the women on the part of decision makers was also reported. The radio tool also enabled wider household participation and engagement in discussions on women's rights, with husbands joining awareness sessions, showing support to women and voicing the need for increased recognition of their role and value.

Breaking Perceptions on Women's Roles in Nepal - in the communities targeted by the JP RWEE in Nepal, women rarely go out of their house due to traditional beliefs and attitudes which deem it unacceptable for women to be seen in public spaces. Within the context of the programme's work engaging women, men and the wider community in tackling barriers to gender equality and challenging social norms, women have successfully broken through these barriers and formed a women-led construction management committee to lead the construction of agro-product collection/storage structures being built under the JP RWEE. Women have both successfully managed the project, and also worked as labourers and masons in the construction, with extra support and training for women provided to enable them to carry out quality construction in a newly acquired trade. This proved to be ground-breaking in challenging stereotypes and shows that, with the necessary supportive environment in place, women can take on traditionally 'male only' occupations even in strongly conservative communities.

Importance of Working through Local Stakeholders - the programme's approach of working through local government, including extension services, was a key factor in the ability of the programme to carry on implementation despite the challenges of the pandemic. The involvement of local government meant that support and supervision was still able to be carried out, despite the restrictions to movement which limited travel for JP RWEE participating agency staff. In Ethiopia, Liberia, Niger and Rwanda, local authorities, including extension workers and, in Liberia, gender county coordinators, played an important role in overseeing the implementation of planned activities, carrying out monitoring visits and providing progress reports.

f. Qualitative Assessment

Opportunities for qualitative assessment during the year were limited, with agency staff unable to carry out field monitoring visits as planned. Towards the end of the year, with most restrictions eased, and activities being fully implemented, a number of assessments led by the global level JP RWEE team and involving all participating countries, were started, as part of the ISC approved Global Learning Plan³⁷. The findings of these assessments, including a final evaluation, will be available in 2021, along with further monitoring findings and qualitative assessment of the programme.

It was observed through programme monitoring and feedback from women and local stakeholders, that women were active in articulating needs and demanding appropriate responses from decision makers during this challenging year. This included in communities where women are traditionally excluded from participating in public life or given recognition of in terms of voice, participation and leadership. They were central to the local level response and were at the forefront of sensitization efforts through the Dimitra Club networks in Niger and through women's groups including cooperatives and Self-Help Groups, in all countries. This represents significant progress towards addressing underlying causes of gender inequality, and bringing about sustainable transformative change over the long term. It is further important as the actions of women, and the positive responses of the community and local authorities in respecting the role of women and listening to their needs, increases the likelihood of women being included in long term responses to COVID-19 as recovery plans are put in place to revitalize local economies and communities.

During 2020, the partnerships established by the JP RWEE as part of the programme's approach to women's economic empowerment proved to be extremely robust and were fundamental to how the programme adapted to the requirements of the rapidly evolving circumstances. It was in large part due to these partnerships that implementation continued during the onset of the pandemic without further disruption than was necessary. In Ethiopia, where the programme is fully implemented with local government, movement of participating agency staff was severely restricted for the majority of

³⁷ See para Knowledge Management

the year. However, implementation and monitoring were successfully carried out by local government staff on the ground. In Liberia and Niger, where UN staff were also unable to travel to the field for a number of months, as result of the strong partnership with local authorities at field level, local extension workers and, in Liberia, government social workers, carried out monitoring, and submitted reports to the participating agencies, raising any issues which needed resolution in a timely manner. Local level implementing partners in Rwanda, along with agricultural extension workers, were also able to ensure continuous monitoring and real time information, with activities resuming at the earliest possible occasion once restrictions were eased. As the programme draws to a completion in 2021, these partnerships will continue to be central to sustainability and exit strategies put in place to ensure that the long term gains achieved by the programme are embedded through local community structures, networks and institutions.

During 2020, the JP RWEE continued to build on the synergies developed through the programme and extended partnerships outside of the programme through links established with other institutions, both within and outside of the UN. In Liberia, for example, other UN agencies have adopted the joint programme's women's training curricula (e.g. literacy, business development, VSLAs, etc.) and are using the JP RWEE as a best practice on ensuring a gender responsive policy environment for the economic empowerment of rural women (e.g. in the UN's Liberia Spotlight Initiative)³⁸. The JP RWEE also established a strategic partnership with the National Public Health Institute in Liberia by aligning its implementation plan with the COVID-19 National Response Plan, and with the National AIDS Commission (NAC) on HIV/AIDS prevention in targeted communities. The private sector partnership with Orange in Liberia also continued, with 50 women employed as mobile money agents. In Kyrgyzstan, JP RWEE beneficiaries were incorporated into UN Women's Election Project, which supports women to run for local elections. They were also included in a government led multi agency survey on the impact of COVID-19 and identification of resulting needs. Furthermore, the partnership with the private sector IT Academy was critical to supporting the transition to online mechanisms during the pandemic. In Nepal, GALS beneficiaries were linked into IFAD's RERP³⁹ programme with the government of Nepal, strengthening further opportunities for women's economic empowerment. In Rwanda, the JP RWEE is complementing other projects implemented in the programme areas, primarily by the Rwanda Agricultural Board, in the domain of family farming and food systems whereby they have been building the capacity of farmers to increase production of both crops and livestock.

At the coordination level, National Steering Committees and Technical Working Groups were able to meet through online mechanisms and coordinate remotely in real time as the extensive and hard hitting government restrictions, severely impacting on local community life, were rapidly imposed across all country programmes. Meeting regularity was increased, and informed and timely decision-making enabled an efficient and effective response to the situation at field level. Remote monitoring strategies were agreed, and implementing partners and local government authorities were engaged in implementation as outlined above.

g. Governance Mechanisms

The JP RWEE's well proven governance mechanisms ensured effective leadership and decision making at both the country and global levels throughout this unprecedented year of crisis and uncertainty.

At the global level, an International Steering Committee (ISC), with consists of representatives of the donors, the seven participating governments and the four participating UN agencies, continued to

³⁸ The Spotlight Initiative is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

³⁹ Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project Nepal <https://rerp.moics.gov.np/en>

provide overall guidance and strategic vision to the JP RWEE. During 2020, the ISC were kept up to date of the evolving situation at country level, and, in view of the postponement of activities, the donors efficiently facilitated a six month no cost extension from January to June 2021, in order for programme activities to be successfully completed as per the workplans. The annual meeting of the ISC was postponed until January 2021 in order to facilitate the main agenda item and in view of the fact that, as the programme is in its final year, there were no new funds to be allocated or workplans to approve. The main agenda item was the presentation of an internal stocktaking exercise, which involved extensive and comprehensive reflection and analysis by internal JP RWEE stakeholders on the first phase of the programme.⁴⁰

The ISC is supported by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which consists of focal points from the four participating UN Agencies and provides overall technical guidance to the JP RWEE. The TAC met frequently during 2020, particularly during the onset of the pandemic, in order to ensure timely information flow and responses between the country and global level, and to ensure that the ISC were informed of any issues as needed. They were supported by the JP RWEE Global Coordinator who is responsible for the overall management of the programme and is hosted by WFP. The Global Coordination Unit (GCU) maintained ongoing contact with National Coordinators throughout the months of disruption caused by the pandemic, in order to get real time updates of the evolving situation at country level, and to ensure information and updates were communicated to the TAC and the ISC in a timely manner. From March to August, the GCU held weekly then bi-weekly meetings with National Coordinators, subsequently transitioning to monthly meetings as full operations were resumed.

At country level, the JP RWEE is overseen by the National Steering Committees (NSC), which is usually chaired by a high-level official of the Ministry of Agriculture with the participation of other relevant ministries (Ministry of Women's Affairs/Gender, Labour, Youth, Finance, etc.), the UN Resident Coordinator, civil society organizations, and representatives of rural women. Mirroring the global structure, the NSC is supported by a Technical Working Group, consisting of focal points from the four participating agencies, and a National Coordinator. The Technical Working Group (TWG) works together to ensure joint implementation and address any technical programme implementation issues together. The National Programme Coordinators lead in-country activities, ensure the harmonized and timely delivery of activities and reporting, as well as advance visibility and advocacy actions. During 2020, the in-country governance mechanisms were key to ensuring timely decisions and approvals in the adaptation of workplans and modalities of implementation required as a response to COVID-19.

h. Knowledge management

In 2020, knowledge management efforts were centred on the implementation of the Global Learning Plan. The Global Learning Plan aims to facilitate and strengthen the management, development, documentation, dissemination and use of knowledge emerging from the JP RWEE, in order to inform project performance, improve delivery, and scale up best practices and innovations, both at country and global level. The plan is composed of five components:

- i. A global final evaluation
- ii. The development of four policy briefs⁴¹ linked to the outcome areas of the JP RWEE in order to formulate evidence-based policies that effectively promote rural women's economic empowerment

⁴⁰ See para Knowledge Management

⁴¹ i. Making Livelihoods Sustainable for Rural Women ii. Why Climate Resilient Agriculture matters for rural Women's Economic Empowerment iii. Women and Technology in Rural Areas iv. Making Markets Work for Rural Women

- iii. WEAI Synthesis Report⁴² composed of synthesized findings from WEAI endline assessments in four countries
- iv. A consolidation workshop to draw on major learnings from the JP RWEE and inform future programming, and to enable experience sharing and cross fertilization among the seven participating countries
- v. Good Practices Documentation⁴³

As a result of the pandemic, the start of the evaluation was delayed until October 2020. The evaluation is being conducted by an external consultancy firm, Mokoro Ltd, who were engaged through a competitive process. It adheres to the UN Evaluation Group Norms and Standards and is conducted under WFP's quality assurance system for decentralized evaluations (DEQAS). The first country level field study took place in early December in Niger, with further in-depth field level studies planned for Guatemala and Nepal in early 2021. Desk studies are being carried out in the remaining four countries. The full evaluation findings will be published at the end of April 2021 and will be used to inform future programming, to raise awareness on holistic approaches to women's economic empowerment, and to enhance visibility of the JP RWEE.

The WEAI endline process was started in Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Niger in late 2020, although it was delayed by damaging hurricanes in Guatemala. The report findings, which are mainly quantitative in nature, will serve to complement the more qualitative findings of the evaluation, and will analyse how the programme has contributed to women's empowerment, as well as enable comparison across country contexts.

The four-day consolidation workshop had been planned to be held in Kyrgyzstan in September 2020, attended by global and country level JP RWEE representatives. However, this was cancelled due to the ban on international travel imposed by many countries under COVID-19 regulations. The exercise has since been divided into two components: an internal stocktaking reflection, and a peer to peer learning exercise which will cover key thematic learning areas of the programme and will be held over a series of five virtual learning workshops in 2021. The purpose of the stocktaking was to identify and reflect on the challenges, successes, and lessons learned and to make recommendations relating to a second phase of the programme. The exercise, facilitated by a consultant, took place between October – December 2020 and consisted of extensive reflection at the country and global level through questionnaires and workshops involving the global level TAC, country level National Steering Committees, country teams, implementing partners, and the programme's donors. Full findings will be presented to the ISC in January 2021 and will be used, along with the findings of the other components of the learning plan, to inform future programming.

Plans to hold a CSW side event did not go ahead due to the complete cancellation of all side events for CSW 64, which was due to be held in March 2020, just as COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO). There was no possibility to host any in-person events throughout 2020, although the JP RWEE did feature in an online event for the International Day of Rural Women hosted by the Rome Based Agencies in October 2020.

Similarly, there were no possibilities for travel or field exchanges during the year. However, experience sharing between the Global Coordination Unit and the National Coordinators was increased during 2020, initially in response to the pandemic, but developing into an established regular monthly meeting to exchange information and share experiences. This included presentations on the impact of COVID-19 on the programme in each country, and on programme adaptation and learning. Other topics discussed included the use of ICT and changing household relations.

⁴² Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Niger

⁴³ Selected good practices will be identified across the participating countries

A JP RWEE COVID-19 Guidance document was also developed by the Global Coordination Unit and shared with country teams. The document contained comprehensive guidance on adapting programme operations, ensuring effective coordination mechanisms, adaption of activities and programme implementation methodologies, engagement with beneficiaries and communities, supporting beneficiaries' resilience through the programme's interventions, and mitigating risks associated with COVID-19. The guidelines proved to be a useful tool in supporting country teams with their response strategies.

All countries completed M & E and Knowledge Management plans for the year which were then compiled at the global level to enable identification of key themes and learning being developed across the programme, and the development of associated products for sharing and dissemination. A number of knowledge products, including good practice documents on topics including land rights, savings groups, and social norm change will be disseminated in 2021.

ii) Indicator Based Performance Assessment:

The table below shows an update on the main results achieved for 2019, using the logical framework from the JP RWEE Programme Document. Since each country has translated the four main JP RWEE outcomes into activities aligned with their own national priorities and baseline assessments, the results are listed with a reference to the country that reported it.

	Achieved Indicator Targets	
Outcome 1: Rural women have improved food and nutrition security	<p>Quantitative: Increase of agricultural production of women farmers ⁴⁴</p> <p><u>Guatemala</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 66.4% increase in rural women's maize production. - 39% increase in rural women's bean production. <p>Overall average: 53%</p> <p><u>Liberia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10% increase in agricultural production for rice with 501 smallholder farmers - 5% increase in agricultural production for cassava with 501 smallholder farmers <p>Overall average: 8%</p> <p><u>Nepal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 306% average increase in agricultural production <p><u>Niger</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 66.45% increase in livestock growth - 14% increase in groundnut production. 	<p>Qualitative: Evidence of improvement of rural women dietary diversity and consumption patterns</p> <p><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 300 beneficiaries improved the quality of household nutrition with fresh and organically grown vegetables. <p><u>Liberia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1,027 beneficiaries (809 women and 218 men) had adequate dietary intake at the household level for their nutrition. <p><u>Nepal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% increase in quantity and frequency in vegetable consumption. 97 per cent of HHs (143 HHs) supported improved Food Consumption Score. <p><u>Niger</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dietary Diversity Score remained at 5 in Falwel, 3.73 in Djirataoua and 4.9 Guidan Amoumoune.

⁴⁴ No Data provided by Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan and Rwanda

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 33.8% increase in cowpeas production. - 2.06% increase in sesame production. - 15.7% increase in millet production. <p>Overall average: 38%</p>	
<p>Output 1.1: Rural women have increased access to resources, assets and services critical for their food and nutrition security</p>	<p><u>Ethiopia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 950 rural women increased their knowledge on improved nutrition practices - 1,268 beneficiaries (968 women and 300 men) accessed agricultural inputs - 823 beneficiaries (782 women and 41 men) accessed improved production techniques - 512 beneficiaries (212 women and 300 men) were trained on climate smart agricultural inputs <p><u>Guatemala</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2,024 beneficiaries (1,748 women and 276 men) improved and increased knowledge on agricultural production techniques. - 1,227 beneficiaries (951 women and 276 men) accessed innovative technologies. - 3,525 beneficiaries (2499 women and 1026 men) strengthened their capacities in gender-sensitive food and nutrition security and health promotion. - 482 women received and accessed agricultural inputs. - 1,470 (1,131 women and 276 men) received technical assistance - 857 women farmers engaged in the Farmer-to-Farmer methodology <p><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 900 beneficiaries (871 women and 29 men) improved and increased knowledge on agricultural production techniques - 300 beneficiaries (271 women and 21 men) strengthened their training and capacities on agricultural inputs and technologies. - 600 rural farmers accessed seeds for agricultural production. - 300 beneficiaries (271 women and 21 men) received and accessed agricultural inputs <p><u>Liberia:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 401 beneficiaries (341 women and 60 men) improved and increased knowledge on agricultural production techniques. <p><u>Nepal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3,002 rural women strengthened and improved agricultural production techniques. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 800 rural women received agricultural inputs. <p><u>Niger</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1,419 beneficiaries (1,219 women and 404 men) strengthened their knowledge on nutrition. - 384 rural women strengthened their knowledge in agricultural production techniques. - 323 women accessed agricultural inputs - Establishment of three communal market garden sites - 11 Farmer Field Schools established - engaging 314 people (234 women and 80 men) <p><u>Rwanda</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1,989 beneficiaries (1,661 women and 328 men) accessed improved production techniques. - 1,986 beneficiaries (1,653 women and 333 men) accessed nutrition training and home-base Early Childhood Development feeding activities. - 1,989 beneficiaries (1661 women and 328 men) strengthened their knowledge in fruit propagation. - 989 beneficiaries (780 women and 209 men) received or accessed agricultural inputs. - 994 beneficiaries (830 women and 164 men) established their own fruit nurseries.
<p>Output 1.2: Rural women have greater capacity to enhance and control local food security reserves</p>	<p><u>Ethiopia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 319 women accessed innovative food processing plants. - 453 women accessed agricultural inputs and milk processing equipment. - 512 beneficiaries (212 women and 300 men) accessed technologies and CSA inputs - 772 beneficiaries (731 women and 41 men) accessed agricultural training - 603 women accessed labour saving technologies - 75 women were assisted to obtain land <p><u>Guatemala:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 857 women received training in post-harvest techniques. <p><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 300 rural farmers (271 women and 29 men) strengthened knowledge and capacity on food processing technologies. <p><u>Liberia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 491 beneficiaries (400 women and 91 men) accessed tools and machineries for enhancing agricultural production. - 109 women smallholder farmers are accessed labour-saving technologies.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 600 smallholder farmers (509 women and 91 men) accessed food processing facilities. <p><u>Niger</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5000 former beneficiaries (3500 women and 1500 men) received agro-pastoral processing kits. - 402 beneficiaries accessed agro-silvo-pastoral products and processing kits. - 311 accessed innovative food processing plants. <p><u>Rwanda</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three community maize drying halls constructed. - 990 beneficiaries (781 women and 209 men) accessed labour-saving technologies
<p>Outcome 2: Rural women have increased income to secure their livelihoods</p>	<p><u>Ethiopia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - USD\$ 24,512 income generated from six women agri-business cooperatives with 860 members. <p><u>Guatemala</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1,041 people (872 women and 169 men) generated a total of USD\$ 123,544 - 46 groups with 1,114 women members, have saved a total of \$212,437 <p><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - US\$ 23, 640 income generated from vegetable sales by rural women. <p><u>Liberia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - US\$ 27,500 generated from 10 women-owned and non-agriculture small businesses with 175 women members. - 1,175 women are accessing sustainable rural financial services through the 32 existing and 16 newly established Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), which has provided US\$ 58,750 in rural credit <p><u>Nepal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2,384 women generated a total of US\$ 252,195 linked to increased production of vegetables - 122 rural women’s groups accumulated US\$ 96,752, which was made available to 2,860 direct beneficiaries through a revolving fund scheme. <p><u>Rwanda</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12 cooperatives with 1,181 members (927 are women and 254 men) generated a total income of US\$ 62,191
<p>Output 2.1: Rural women have enhanced</p>	<p><u>Ethiopia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 860 members linked to buyers using different mechanisms and have managed to generate an income of USD\$18, 627 USD.

<p>entrepreneurship skills and value chains to access markets for their products</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Six women agro-business cooperatives (2 Milk processing and 2 cattle fattening business, grain producing and 1 grinding service business cooperative) were linked to buyers. - 150 rural women strengthened their knowledge on marketing skills. - 48 rural women and men strengthened their knowledge on a training of trainers in basic business skill and entrepreneurship - Six women agri-business cooperatives were linked to accessed market opportunities/buyers - 100 rural women and men strengthened their knowledge on business management and climate smart agriculture <p><u>Guatemala</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1,809 rural farmers (1,533 women and 276 men) accessed technical assistance. - 616 rural women strengthened their knowledge on effective marketing. - 949 women equipped with improved skills. - 329 women engaged in self-employment/income generating activities - 333 women increased their sales by 48% - 923 people received training in relevant areas to enhance women’s entrepreneurship skills and market access. <p><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 840 beneficiaries (831 women and 9 men) strengthened their entrepreneurial, financial literacy and business skills. <p><u>Liberia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One value chain assessment conducted for rice and other vegetables. - 400 rural women increased their economic security through strengthened knowledge on business development. - 487 rural women strengthened their literacy and numeracy skills. - 341 rural women strengthened their knowledge in labour-saving technologies. <p><u>Nepal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2,003 rural women from 82 rural women’s cooperatives have enhanced entrepreneurship skills and are engaged in value chains to access markets - HGSFP) pilot – 56 schools - 2,384 rural women farmers generated income from their sales market - 122 rural women farmers’ groups, 56 rural women from 55 rural women farmers’ groups were supported to enhance their market linkages <p><u>Rwanda</u></p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2,183 beneficiaries (1,760 women and 423 men) received entrepreneurship trainings for building on the capacities of cooperatives. - 		
<p>Output 2.2: Rural women have increased access to decent wage employment opportunities</p>	<p><u>Ethiopia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3,800 rural women accessed start-up capital for their individual IGAs including cattle fattening, milk processing, grain production and grinding mills services. - 28 women and men shared best practices from existing and other successful RUSACCOs on their access to financial services through an experience sharing field visit. <p>Kyrgyzstan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 739 beneficiaries received food assistance. <p><u>Liberia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 50 rural women gained employment within the private sector (Orange Liberia Mobile Money). - 399 rural women and 88 young rural women and adolescent girls living with HIV/AIDS strengthened their knowledge in business development and financial literacy skills. <p><u>Nepal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 135 rural women received short-term wage employment through cash assistance for assets activities - 87 rural women engaged in wage employment opportunities for agro-product collection centres. <p><u>Niger</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 293 rural women developed business plans - 200 women and girls received literacy training 		
<p>Outcome 3: Rural women have enhanced leadership and participation in their communities and in rural institutions, and in shaping laws, policies and programmes</p>	<p>Proportion of rural women elected representatives in rural councils</p> <p><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></p>	<p>Proportion of POs led by women</p> <p><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% of POs led by rural women. <p><u>Niger</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 78% of POs led by rural women. 	<p>Evidence of rural women’s empowerment in intra-household decision making</p> <p>N/A (awaiting WEAI endline results in 2021)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 18 candidates participated in program mentoring activities and are prepared to participate in upcoming local elections 	<u>Nepal</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1,065 women in leadership positions in cooperatives. - 552 rural women in rural women's leaderships in producers' organizations 	
<p>Output 3.1: Rural women, including young women, have enhanced confidence and leadership skills to participate in local governance</p>	<p>Rural women have been supported to gain access to literacy skills and basic education</p> <p><u>Niger</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1,204 girls received scholarships and enrolled in the three terms of the school year 	<p>Rural women have strengthened their self-confidence and leadership skills</p> <p><u>Ethiopia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1294 rural women strengthened their leadership, assertiveness and management skills. <p><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 294 women and 6 men mobilized into 54 self-help groups <p><u>Rwanda</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100 (86 women and 14 men) rural farmers strengthened their cooperative management skills. 	<p>Rural women have increased their participation in Local Governance</p> <p><u>Guatemala</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 87 women municipal leaders strengthened knowledge on women's participation at community levels. - 305 people (120 members of Community Development Councils and 185 women) took part in decision-making spaces at the organizational level <p><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 36 women candidates from the target municipalities registered their candidature for the local elections. <p><u>Nepal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1,180 rural women engage in dialogue with government officials and enhance knowledge on planning processes <p><u>Niger</u></p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 250 rural women engaged in sensitization for participation in the elections. - Four Unions of POs strengthened their organizational capacities.
<p>Output 3.2: Rural women have greater organizational capacities to form, sustain and participate in POs, cooperatives and unions</p>	<p><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 294 women and 6 men mobilized into 54 self-help groups - 768 members of 112 SHGs joined into 4 Pos <p><u>Liberia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seven farming groups organized into farming cooperatives investing in rice and cassava value chains. - Seven farming groups strengthened affiliations with four formal organizations. - Three strategic dialogues held on land rights networking. <p><u>Nepal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three women’s groups registered as formal cooperatives, encompassing 1014 rural women. <p><u>Niger</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Five Unions of POs strengthened their organizational capacities. - 11,725 women members engage under the 469 farmers organizations. <p><u>Rwanda</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eight informal groups legally registered as formal cooperatives. 		
<p>Output 3.3: Rural women, including young women, have increased capacity to engage in and influence relevant policy forums at national and regional levels</p>	<p><u>Ethiopia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 28 beneficiaries (23 women and 5 men) took part in learning visit and strengthened their knowledge in policy at national and regional levels. <p><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 85 rural women participated in policy lobbying activities at local and central levels. - Two regional dialogues held during the reporting period including Informal platform that allowed for more than 80 rural women to interact and hold on a dialogue on the role of rural women in local economies and socio - political development, especially during the response to COVID-19 pandemic. 		

<p>Output 3.4: Rural women, including young women, have enhanced awareness on their rights in a more supportive community/local environment</p>	<p><u>Ethiopia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 18,000 Community members sensitized on gender and COVID 19 taking in to account the precaution of COVID 19. <p><u>Guatemala</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 205 rural women enhanced their awareness and knowledge on participation and decision-making mechanisms. - 92 rural women participated in the application of the GALS methodology; 121 replications took place afterwards. <p><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 14 initiatives relating to COVID-19 response were organized and implemented <p><u>Liberia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 615 rural women enhanced their awareness on women’s rights and land rights. <p><u>Nepal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 650 rural women strengthened knowledge in issues related to women’s economic empowerment, barriers and discriminatory social norms, gender responsive program of local government, and challenges faced by women farmers. - 730 community members (645 women and 85 men) participated in the GALS methodology. - 140 family members enhanced their awareness on gender equality and women’s rights. - 483 rural women engaged in a radio campaign ‘Query for my leader.’ - 43 champions engaged in GALS training and dissemination. <p><u>Niger</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2,400 women and girls and the 1,200 men and boys of the 120 Dimitra Clubs grouped within the 4 communal networks <p><u>Rwanda</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 360 champions engaged in GALS training and dissemination. - 200 beneficiaries (170 Women and 30 men) reached through GALS 	
<p>Outcome 4: A more gender responsive policy environment is secured for the economic</p>	<p>Government Institutions developing work plans and budgets ensuring rural women inclusion on resource distribution</p>	<p>Proportion of government budgets and donor funding allocated to programmes benefitting rural women</p> <p><u>Nepal</u></p>

<p>empowerment of rural women</p>	<p><u>Ethiopia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 28 expert's women and men strengthened their knowledge on gender and land issues. - 28 representatives from Woreda administration were trained on Climate Smart Agriculture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 38.65% of federal budget and donor funding contributed to rural women's economic empowerment. <p><u>Niger</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20% of municipal budget allocated to rural women's economic empowerment. - 1% of national budget allocated to the ministry of promoting women and protecting child.
<p>Output 4.1: Policy makers and parliamentarians have enhanced capacities to effectively mainstream gender into land, food, agriculture, nutrition and rural employment policies, laws and budgets</p>	<p><u>Ethiopia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 28 public officials strengthened their knowledge on gender and land issues. - 28 representatives from Woreda administration were trained on Climate Smart Agriculture. - 130 public officials (58 female and 72 male) enhanced their knowledge and skills on the effects of climate change on women and their contributions to mitigate the impact. - Draft standardized gender inclusive CSA training manual, including a Training of Trainers (TOT). <p>Guatemala:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One National Coalition for the Economic Empowerment of Women was signed <p><u>Liberia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two forums were held at county level on women's land rights - The Cooperative Development Agency (CDA) has developed its Gender Policy and is implementing the policy. <p><u>Nepal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 63 locally elected leaders (27 women and 36 men) enhanced their knowledge on GESI and GRB in local level participatory planning processes. 	
<p>Output 4.2: Greater availability of tools and data to track progress in the economic empowerment of rural women</p>	<p><u>Ethiopia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three evidence-based studies were finalized (Rapid assessment on Gender and Agricultural Mechanization conducted with MOA, Policy brief on agricultural mechanization, A bibliography on gender and land issues in Ethiopia.) - The process of developing the National Agriculture Policy and strategy has started. <p><u>Liberia</u></p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The PUNOs conducted joint monitoring and assessment missions in the field. <p>Rwanda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A study led by the JP RWEE in collaboration with the local partner the ICCO Cooperation in Rwanda, analysed existing labour-saving technologies in agriculture.
<p>Output 4.3: An enabling environment is promoted to reflect rural women’s priorities in regional and global policy processes</p>	<p><u>Ethiopia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishment of monthly ‘Research dissemination Forum’ in December 2020. - Four meetings held under the Ethiopian Women’s Land Rights Task Force on laws and policies in the agriculture sector that affect the rights of women. <p><u>Kyrgyzstan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 80 women activists participated in online dialogue ‘Sherine’ <p><u>Niger</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members of the NSC conducted a mission of capitalization of achievements of RWEE.

ii) A Specific Story

Rural women’s individual stories illustrate the transformational journey experienced by accessing the tools and skills needed to enhance their food security, livelihoods diversification and decision-making power within their households and communities. In 2020, three stories from rural women in Kyrgyzstan, Liberia and Nepal are showcased.

Story 1: Winning elections and paving the way for a woman politician



“Women can do anything, they can work and be successful in any area, community, politics or business,” Nuria Temirbek Kyzy believes.

Nuria lives in the village of Ak-Zhar in the At-Bashy *rayon* of the Naryn *oblast* in Kyrgyzstan. Six years ago, Nuria was a stay-at-home housewife, who had never comprehended working – until she began participating in the JP RWEE. Two years later, with her newly acquired knowledge, skills and confidence she became a deputy of the local council (*kenesh*), and since then has been constantly helping her fellow villagers.

Since participating in a Self Help Group and developing business skills, she, along with other women in the group, have opened a number of enterprises in her village, where more than 50 women have been able to find work as a result of the skills and opportunities acquired through the group participation. This experience gave her the self-esteem and confidence which led to her becoming an elected local council member.

“My outlook on life has changed for the better, I learned so much new information, participated in various trainings, and was able to help many people. I started believing in myself and in 2016 put forward my candidacy for the post of member of the local council (kenesh) and won the elections. I used to be sure that a woman should stay at home, raise children, take care of her husband. But it turned out that we are very strong, that we can do everything,” says Nuria.

Now she not only works in the local *kenesh*, but also oversees several enterprises developed through the JP RWEE, including tailoring, handicrafts, farming, and engagement in processing industries.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Nuria’s initiative continued to thrive, funds were allocated from the local council budget for the purchase of materials so that seamstresses could sew masks and sell them to the local population at an affordable price, with families in need receiving protective equipment for free.

“I feel different, useful and strong. At first, my husband was against my activities, because I was often not at home and I had to go to trainings. But then he realized what an important work I was doing. Now he supports me. I help people both through the projects and the local council. A woman member of the local parliament differs from a male counterpart in that we better understand the problems that women and children have to face every day, so we try to help solve them,” says Nuria.

She calls on all women not to be afraid to start working and to benefit society, because experience shows that a woman can do anything - the main thing is to believe in herself.

Story 2: Building a business beyond borders



Mariama Fallah, 39, lives in Sinoe County in Liberia. Mariam has always been an entrepreneur in her local community, but she was eager to branch out of her local business and become a cross-border trader. In 2019, Mariam started to participate in the JP RWEE, where she was able to gain the vital skills, knowledge and confidence she needed to expand her business beyond borders.

"Before my participation in the JP RWEE, I used to sell charcoal in the local market in Greenville as a community market woman. But I wanted to expand my business and become a cross border trader. But, at that time I did not have the confidence in myself because I did not have the knowledge about cross border trade and the rights of such traders in the ECOWAS region, including the security issues that many women traders face at border points.

When I participated in the literacy and business skills classes and later in my local Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), I was able to better understand what cross border trading is, and my rights as a cross border trader. The programme opened my eyes, and today I am now crossing the borders in the region to trade and to buy goods because I now have the confidence and knowledge as a trader and as a woman. I now use my local VSLA as a space in my town to also discuss issues such as gender based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, extortion, and harassment affecting women traders for action to be taken by the local government.

I am now a registered member of the Association of Women in Cross Border Trade which is currently serving as one of many key entry points to provide information, services, finances, and skills training under the programme. My business has also grown very big, and I continue to get mentoring and coaching services from the programme through my community-based facilitator and the AWICBT."

III. Other Assessments or Evaluations

In Ethiopia, Guatemala and Niger, rapid assessments were carried out in relation to the impact of COVID-19 on targeted communities. Common findings included: limited access to markets for women; stagnation or temporary closure of businesses and income generation opportunities; reduced income and the use of group savings to cover the shortfall; taking out loans; increased burden of care for women; reduced access to health services, and limiting household expenditure to essential items as a coping mechanism. However, beneficiaries also stated that their participation in the JP RWEE, primarily through group participation, access to savings and credit, along with opportunities for income generation, constituted the difference between surviving the socio-economic shock to their household, and being able to revitalize their businesses and opportunities for income generation when restrictions eased. Being able to plan and mitigate, and take a problem solving approach as groups and as households was also identified by GALS participants in Nepal and Rwanda as a critical resilience strategy applied by women and their families. Programme monitoring in the final few months of 2020, along with the results outlined in the narrative section above, show that the programme continued to have a positive impact in improving food and nutrition security and securing livelihoods.

In Liberia, the joint programme, with technical support from the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) and in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection conducted an assessment on the 'Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index' (WEAI) in Bong County to determine the level of women's empowerment in the county and to inform future women's economic empowerment programming in the area.

Recommendations from the assessment included: tailoring empowerment programmes to cash crop production due to the existing high level of participation of women in food crop production activities; prioritizing linkages to markets to enable women to generate incomes from their farm produce; increasing investment in creating access to credit; undertaking further research to better understand the root causes of women's low rights over household assets, and focusing on empowerment interventions that help women shift the use of their incomes in favour of acquiring assets as this will help enhance women's autonomy, thereby reducing empowerment gaps on rights over household assets.

The final evaluation of the JP RWEE was started in October 2020 as outlined above⁴⁵ and involves field level data collection in Guatemala, Nepal and Niger, alongside desk studies in the remaining four participating countries. WEAI endline surveys were also started in late 2021 and a synthesis report of the findings from the four country endline surveys⁴⁶ will also be available in 2021, alongside findings from assessments of the GALS interventions which are currently being undertaken.

IV. Programmatic revisions

The 2020 programme workplans were approved by the ISC in November 2019, with an allocation of \$7,600,957 (\$6,300,000 to the country teams and \$1,095,571 to the secretariat). As this is the final year of the programme, there have been no further allocations since this date. However, in account of the delays to implementation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall timeframe of the programme was extended through the granting of a six month no cost extension by Sweden and Norway in June 2020, extending the programme implementation period until June 30th, 2021. A revised MOU was signed by participating agencies and the MPTFO in June 2020.

⁴⁵ See para – Knowledge Management

⁴⁶ Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Niger

V. Resources

As outlined above, there were no further allocation of resources during 2020 due to it being the final year of programme implementation.

Resource Mobilisation

Towards the end of 2020, an internal Resource Mobilisation and Partnership Building (RMPB) guidance note was developed to guide the mobilisation of resources for a potential second phase of the JP RWEE following completion of the current programme. The design of the second phase will take place following completion of the global evaluation and will draw on the findings, results and recommendations outlined in the evaluation report, along with other assessments⁴⁷. The RMPB note will guide future resource mobilisation efforts and is aimed at securing multi annual funding from a wider donor base for a second phase of the programme, in order to effectively scale up and build on the good practices developed during the first phase. Central to the strategy is the establishment of an internal partnership working group in November 2020, composed of focal points from the partnership divisions of each participating agency, and the JP RWEE Global Coordination Unit. This group was activated in November 2020 and has provided strategic guidance to the development of future partnership engagement following the findings of the final evaluation. Resource mobilisation efforts will be coordinated with country level teams and aligned with their plans.

2. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

This chapter presents financial data and analysis of the fund 'Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women' using the pass-through funding modality as of 31 December 2020. Financial information for this Fund is also available on the MPTF Office GATEWAY: <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/RWF00>.

1. Sources and Uses of Funds

As of 31 December 2020, 2 contributors have deposited US\$ **29,164,859** in contributions and US\$ **133,261** was earned in interest. The cumulative source of funds was US\$ **29,298,212**. Of this amount, US\$ **28,682,921** has been net funded to 4 Participating Organizations, of which US\$ **23,404,502** has been reported as expenditure.

The Administrative Agent (AA) fee has been charged at the approved rate of 1% on deposits and amounts to US\$ **291,649**. Table 1 provides an overview of the overall sources, uses, and balance of the 'Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women' Fund as of 31 December 2020.

Table 1. Financial Overview, as of 31 December 2020 (in US Dollars)

	Annual 2019	Annual 2020	Cumulative
Sources of Funds			
Contributions from donors	7,600,957	-	29,164,859
Fund Earned Interest and Investment Income	79,910	3,566	133,261
Interest Income received from Participating Organizations	-	-	92
Refunds by Administrative Agent to Contributors	-	-	-

⁴⁷ See para Knowledge Management

Fund balance transferred to another MDTF	-	-	-
Other Income	-	-	-
Total: Sources of Funds	7,680,867	3,566	29,298,212
Use of Funds			
Transfers to Participating Organizations	6,300,000	-	27,097,076
Refunds received from Participating Organizations	-	-	(439,769)
Net Funded Amount	6,300,000	-	26,657,307
Administrative Agent Fees	76,010	-	291,649
Direct Costs: (Steering Committee, Secretariat...etc.)	1,095,571	-	2,025,614
Bank Charges	179	9	612
Other Expenditures	-	-	-
Total: Uses of Funds	7,471,760	9	28,975,181
Change in Fund cash balance with Administrative Agent	209,108	3,556	323,031
Opening Fund balance (1 January)	110,367	319,475	-
Closing Fund balance (31 December)	319,475	323,031	323,031
Net Funded Amount (Includes Direct Cost)	7,395,571	-	28,682,921
Participating Organizations' Expenditure (Includes Direct Cost)	4,065,232	3,753,383	23,404,502
Balance of Funds with Participating Organizations			5,278,419

2. Partner Contributions

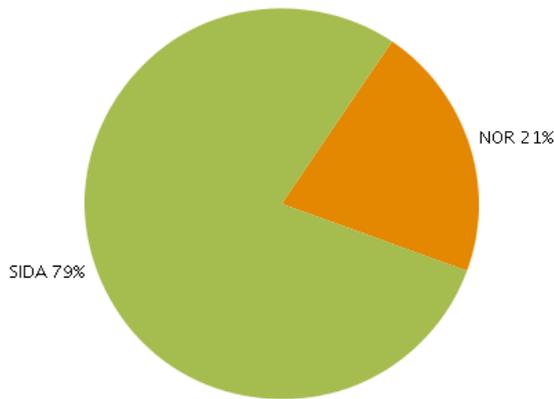
Table 2 provides information on cumulative contributions received from all contributors to this Fund as of 31 December 2020. The 'Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women' Fund is currently being financed by 2 contributors, as listed in the table below.

The table below includes commitments made up to 31 December 2020 through signed Standard Administrative Agreements, and deposits made through 2020.

Table 2. Contributors' Commitments and Deposits, as of 31 December 2020 (in US Dollars)

Contributors	Total Commitments	Prior Years as of 31-Dec-2019 Deposits	Current Year Jan-Dec-2020 Deposits	Total Deposits
NORWAY, Government of	6,127,970	6,127,970	-	6,127,970
SWEDISH INT'L DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION	23,036,889	23,036,889	-	23,036,889
Grand Total	29,164,859	29,164,859	-	29,164,859

Figure 1: Deposits by contributor, cumulative as of 31 December 2020



3. Interest Earned

Interest income is earned in two ways: 1) on the balance of funds held by the Administrative Agent (Fund earned interest), and 2) on the balance of funds held by the Participating Organizations (Agency earned interest) where their Financial Regulations and Rules allow return of interest to the AA. As of 31 December 2020, Fund earned interest amounts to US\$ **133,261**. Details are provided in the table below.

Table 3. Sources of Interest and Investment Income, as of 31 December 2020 (in US Dollars)

Interest Earned	Prior Years as of 31-Dec-2019	Current Year Jan-Dec-2020	Total
Administrative Agent			
Fund Earned Interest and Investment Income	129,695	3,566	133,261
Total: Fund Earned Interest	129,695	3,566	133,261
Participating Organization			
Total: Agency earned interest			
Grand Total	129,695	3,566	133,261

4. Transfer of Funds

Allocations to Participating Organizations are approved by the Steering Committee and disbursed by the Administrative Agent. As of 31 December **2020**, the AA has transferred US\$ **27,097,076** to 4 Participating Organizations (see list below).

4.1 Transfer by Participating Organization

Table 4 provides additional information on the refunds received by the MPTF Office, and the net funded amount for each of the Participating Organizations.

Table 4. Transfer, Refund, and Net Funded Amount by Participating Organization, as of 31 December 2020 (in US Dollars)

Participating Organizations	Transfers	Refunds	Net Funded
FAO	7,188,265		7,188,265
IFAD	3,266,464	(439,769)	2,826,695
UNWOMEN	8,539,158		8,539,158
WFP	8,103,189		8,103,189
Grand Total	27,097,076	(439,769)	26,657,307

5. Expenditure and Financial Delivery Rates

All final expenditures reported for the year 2020 were submitted by the Headquarters of the Participating Organizations. These were consolidated by the MPTF Office.

Project expenditures are incurred and monitored by each Participating Organization, and are reported as per the agreed upon categories for inter-agency harmonized reporting. The reported expenditures were submitted via the MPTF Office's online expenditure reporting tool. The 2020 expenditure data has been posted on the MPTF Office GATEWAY at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/RWF00>.

5.1 Expenditure Reported by Participating Organization

In 2020, US\$ **3,166,261** was reported in expenditure. As shown in table below, the cumulative net funded amount is US\$ **26,657,307** and cumulative expenditures reported by the Participating Organizations amount to US\$ **21,958,615**.

This equates to an overall Fund expenditure delivery rate of **82** percent. The agencies with the three highest delivery rates are: UNWOMEN (89%), WFP (80%) and FAO (79%).

Table 5.1 Net Funded Amount, Reported Expenditure, and Financial Delivery by Participating Organization, as of 31 December 2020 (in US Dollars)

Participating Organization	Approved Amount	Net Funded Amount	Expenditure			Delivery Rate %
			Prior Years as of 31-Dec-2019	Current Year Jan-Dec-2020	Cumulative	
FAO	7,188,265	7,188,265	4,837,546	865,247	5,702,793	79.33
IFAD	2,826,695	2,826,695	1,552,424	627,091	2,179,515	77.10
UNWOMEN	8,539,158	8,539,158	6,606,012	995,695	7,601,707	89.02
WFP	8,103,189	8,103,189	5,796,373	678,228	6,474,600	79.90
Grand Total	26,657,307	26,657,307	18,792,354	3,166,261	21,958,615	82.37

5.2 Expenditure by Project

Table 5.2 displays the net funded amounts, expenditures reported and the financial delivery rates by Participating Organization.

Table 5.2 Expenditure by Project within Country, as of 31 December 2020 (in US Dollars)

Country / Project No.and Project Title		Participating Organization	Approved Amount	Net Funded Amount	Expenditure	Delivery Rate %
Ethiopia						
00092000	RWEE Ethiopia	FAO	933,418	933,418	550,783	59.01
00092000	RWEE Ethiopia	UNWOMEN	901,123	901,123	628,541	69.75
00092000	RWEE Ethiopia	WFP	1,553,715	1,553,715	1,243,919	80.06
Ethiopia Total			3,388,256	3,388,256	2,423,243	71.52

Guatemala						
00092001	RWEE Guatemala	FAO	977,688	977,688	886,701	90.69
00092001	RWEE Guatemala	IFAD	250,500	250,500	130,802	52.22
00092001	RWEE Guatemala	UNWOMEN	1,307,774	1,307,774	1,218,209	93.15
00092001	RWEE Guatemala	WFP	1,652,292	1,652,292	1,429,359	86.51
Guatemala Total			4,188,254	4,188,254	3,665,071	87.51

Kyrgyzstan						
00092002	RWEE Kyrgyzstan	FAO	1,070,589	1,070,589	912,733	85.26
00092002	RWEE Kyrgyzstan	IFAD	584,500	584,500	464,860	79.53
00092002	RWEE Kyrgyzstan	UNWOMEN	1,515,821	1,515,821	1,325,873	87.47
00092002	RWEE Kyrgyzstan	WFP	1,067,345	1,067,345	996,220	93.34
Kyrgyzstan Total			4,238,255	4,238,255	3,699,685	87.29

Liberia						
00092003	RWEE Liberia	FAO	995,021	995,021	634,409	63.76
00092003	RWEE Liberia	UNWOMEN	2,001,885	2,001,885	1,954,305	97.62
00092003	RWEE Liberia	WFP	1,091,349	1,091,349	671,172	61.50
Liberia Total			4,088,255	4,088,255	3,259,885	79.74

Nepal						
00092004	RWEE Nepal	FAO	869,739	869,739	751,791	86.44
00092004	RWEE Nepal	IFAD	383,174	383,174	226,357	59.07
00092004	RWEE Nepal	UNWOMEN	1,150,800	1,150,800	1,085,378	94.32
00092004	RWEE Nepal	WFP	874,061	874,061	655,550	75.00
Nepal Total			3,277,774	3,277,774	2,719,076	82.95

Niger						
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00092005	RWEE Niger	FAO	1,531,500	1,531,500	1,261,333	82.36
00092005	RWEE Niger	IFAD	842,793	842,793	784,766	93.11
00092005	RWEE Niger	UNWOMEN	837,443	837,443	746,677	89.16
00092005	RWEE Niger	WFP	876,521	876,521	661,884	75.51
Niger Total			4,088,257	4,088,257	3,454,660	84.50

Rwanda						
00092006	RWEE Rwanda	FAO	810,310	810,310	705,043	87.01
00092006	RWEE Rwanda	IFAD	765,728	765,728	572,731	74.80
00092006	RWEE Rwanda	UNWOMEN	824,312	824,312	642,724	77.97
00092006	RWEE Rwanda	WFP	987,906	987,906	816,497	82.65
Rwanda Total			3,388,256	3,388,256	2,736,995	80.78

Grand Total			26,657,307	26,657,307	21,958,615	82.37
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5.3 Expenditure by Category

Project expenditures are incurred and monitored by each Participating Organization and are reported as per the agreed categories for inter-agency harmonized reporting. In 2006 the UN Development Group (UNDG) established six categories against which UN entities must report inter-agency project expenditures. Effective 1 January 2012, the UN Chief Executive Board (CEB) modified these categories as a result of IPSAS adoption to comprise eight categories. All expenditure incurred prior to 1 January 2012 have been reported in the old categories; post 1 January 2012 all expenditure is reported in the new eight categories, outlined in the table below.

2012 CEB Expense Categories

1. Staff and personnel costs
2. Supplies, commodities and materials
3. Equipment, vehicles, furniture and depreciation
4. Contractual services
5. Travel
6. Transfers and grants
7. General operating expenses
8. Indirect costs

Table 5.3 Expenditure by UNDG Budget Category, as of 31 December 2020 (in US Dollars)

Category	Expenditure			Percentage of Total Programme Cost
	Prior Years as of 31-Dec-2019	Current Year Jan-Dec-2020	Total	
Staff & Personnel Cost (New)	2,434,693	363,567	2,798,260	13.70
Suppl, Comm, Materials (New)	2,009,380	372,327	2,381,707	11.66
Equip, Veh, Furn, Depn (New)	785,205	52,413	837,618	4.10
Contractual Services (New)	4,081,751	998,262	5,080,012	24.88

Travel (New)	1,201,308	106,382	1,307,690	6.40
Transfers and Grants (New)	3,818,156	682,174	4,500,330	22.04
General Operating (New)	3,022,903	493,150	3,516,053	17.22
Programme Costs Total	17,353,396	3,068,274	20,421,669	100.00
¹ Indirect Support Costs Total	1,438,959	97,987	1,536,946	7.53
Total	18,792,354	3,166,261	21,958,615	

¹ **Indirect Support Costs** charged by Participating Organization, based on their financial regulations, can be deducted upfront or at a later stage during implementation. The percentage may therefore appear to exceed the 7% agreed-upon for on-going projects. Once projects are financially closed, this number is not to exceed 7%.

6. Cost Recovery

Cost recovery policies for the Fund are guided by the applicable provisions of the Terms of Reference, the MOU concluded between the Administrative Agent and Participating Organizations, and the SAAs concluded between the Administrative Agent and Contributors, based on rates approved by UNDG.

The policies in place, as of 31 December 2020, were as follows:

- **The Administrative Agent (AA) fee:** 1% is charged at the time of contributor deposit and covers services provided on that contribution for the entire duration of the Fund. In the reporting period US\$ was deducted in AA-fees. Cumulatively, as of 31 December 2020, US\$ **291,649** has been charged in AA-fees.
- **Indirect Costs of Participating Organizations:** Participating Organizations may charge 7% indirect costs. In the current reporting period US\$ **97,987** was deducted in indirect costs by Participating Organizations. Cumulatively, indirect costs amount to US\$ **1,536,946** as of 31 December 2020.

7. Accountability and Transparency

In order to effectively provide fund administration services and facilitate monitoring and reporting to the UN system and its partners, the MPTF Office has developed a public website, the MPTF Office Gateway (<http://mptf.undp.org>). Refreshed in real time every two hours from an internal enterprise resource planning system, the MPTF Office Gateway has become a standard setter for providing transparent and accountable trust fund administration services.

The Gateway provides financial information including: contributor commitments and deposits, approved programme budgets, transfers to and expenditures reported by Participating Organizations, interest income and other expenses. In addition, the Gateway provides an overview of the MPTF Office portfolio and extensive information on individual Funds, including their purpose, governance structure and key documents. By providing easy access to the growing number of narrative and financial reports, as well as related project documents, the Gateway collects and preserves important institutional knowledge and facilitates knowledge sharing and management among UN Organizations and their development partners, thereby contributing to UN coherence and development effectiveness.

8. Direct Costs

The Fund governance mechanism may approve an allocation to a Participating Organization to cover costs associated with Secretariat services and overall coordination, as well as Fund level reviews and

evaluations. These allocations are referred to as 'direct costs'. In the reporting period, direct costs charged to the fund amounted to US\$ 0. Cumulatively, as of 31 December 2020, US\$ 2,025,614 has been charged as Direct Costs.

Table: Direct Costs

Participating Organization	Net Funded Amount	Expenditure	Delivery Rate
FAO	420,839	365,356	87%
IFAD	53,500	11,700	22%
UNWOMEN	34,240	2,240	7%
WFP	1,517,035	1,066,591	70%
Total:	2,025,614	1,445,887	71%