

THE FACES OF EMPOWERMENT

A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY



JOINT PROGRAMME ON:
Accelerating Progress towards the
Economic Empowerment of Rural Women



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



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INTRODUCTION

Rural women are key agents in the effort to achieve the economic, environmental and social transformations required for sustainable development. Limited access to credit, health care and education are among the many challenges they face, and these challenges have been aggravated by recent economic and food crises as well as climate change.

Ensuring the empowerment of rural women is key not only to the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities but also to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The joint programme “Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women” (JP RWEE) is a global initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The overarching goal of the programme is to secure rural women’s livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development.

Thanks to the generous contributions of Sweden and Norway, the JP RWEE has been implemented since 2014 in **Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda.**

The JP RWEE builds on the participating agencies’ comparative advantages and institutional strengths in order to achieve improved food and nutrition security; increased income to sustain livelihoods; enhanced participation in decision-making; and a more gender-responsive policy environment.

The programme has reached over 49,000 women and 315,000 members of their families through a comprehensive package of sequenced interventions.

Some of the main results achieved so far include a 103 percent average increase in agricultural production by participants; over USD 1.8 million in sales of products produced by participants; 81 percent of supported producer organizations led by women or with women in key leadership positions; the establishment of savings groups in which more than 16,000 women participate; the

enhancement of skills on gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive budgeting and women’s rights for more than 2,000 government officials; support for the Governments of Guatemala, Ethiopia and Nepal in the development and implementation of gender policies in the agricultural sector; and the convening of key policy forums on rural women’s rights.

Recent country evaluations have also highlighted the contribution of the JP RWEE to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and several SDGs, including SDG 1 - “No Poverty”, SDG 2 - “Zero Hunger”, SDG 5 - “Gender Equality”, SDG 8 - “Decent Work and Economic Growth”, and SDG 17 - “Partnerships for the Goals”.

For more information on the JP RWEE, please visit <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/RWF00>.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

The systematic marginalization of certain ethnic groups can negatively affect gender equality by subjecting rural women from certain communities to additional challenges and discrimination. In three of the seven implementing countries, the JP RWEE has specifically targeted rural women belonging to marginalized groups: indigenous Q'eqchi women in Guatemala; internally displaced women in Ethiopia; and women in Nepal from lower caste groups such as the Madhesi, the Janajati and the Tharu.

As direct beneficiaries of a holistic set of interventions, these women have for the first time gained a voice and a prominent role in overcoming disparities in the economic, social, cultural and political positions and conditions that they have faced for centuries.

GUATEMALA

“ For the past centuries in Guatemala indigenous peoples have long suffered social and political marginalization. As indigenous Q'eqchi women, Maya descendants, we have always faced many additional challenges. We have been discriminated against for our language. But now the Programme (JP RWEE) has empowered us to appreciate our identity and grow from there.

”

Woman beneficiary from Guatemala



NEPAL

“ As a Madhesi woman, I was a person who was detached from the external world, but the JP RWEE changed my life and gave me the opportunity to interact with other women from my community and other people to earn a livelihood. This has changed my relationships, both at home and within my community, as my voice is more heard these days.

”

Ramkali, woman beneficiary from Nepal

ETHIOPIA

“ Due to the recent conflicts and ethnic violence in my country, we have been forced to leave our homes and lands to find new opportunities for our families and try to live a peaceful life. It has been hard and we have felt very vulnerable. Belonging to the JP RWEE has provided us with new hopes for our future. ”

Woman beneficiary from Ethiopia



CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE

Worldwide, rural communities have started to deal with the effects of climate change as unprecedented changing weather conditions and natural resource depletion threaten their food systems and entire livelihoods. In this context, climate smart agriculture has emerged as the approach used to guide the actions needed to transform and reorient agricultural production to adapt effectively to climate change and mitigate the associated risks while ensuring sustainable productivity and food security.

As food insecurity and climate change have become intertwined, the role of rural women has gained relevance given their important role in agriculture and as contributors to more resilient food systems. The JP RWEE has therefore supported activities that enhance rural women's agricultural productivity while maintaining a sustainable climate smart approach. Drawn from local traditional knowledge and available resources, as well as from innovative sustainable technologies, the climate smart agriculture practices that have been implemented in JP RWEE countries respond and adapt to specific local needs, capacities and conditions. Just in 2018, data collected from five of the implementing countries showed an average increase in agricultural production of 34.1 percent.



ETHIOPIA

“ During last year's planting season I sowed 50 kg of improved wheat seeds using a better way of planting that I learned, which is known as line sowing. I harvested 15 quintals of wheat and sold that to the community. With traditional planting, for the same amount of seeds and other inputs, there were times when the yield was not even a quarter of that. ”

Tulule Knife, woman beneficiary from Ethiopia



NEPAL

“ Before the intervention of the JP RWEE, I was not familiar with modern agricultural techniques and we were dependent on subsistence agriculture; furthermore, there was a severe scarcity of water in our village, which made us more vulnerable to the effects of climate phenomena like El Niño. The source was far away, and our little buckets could not carry enough to water our crops. Water management through drip irrigation helped us cope with adverse conditions, alongside new agricultural techniques like nursery establishment and transplanting. ”

Chandra Kala Thapa, woman beneficiary from Nepal

GUATEMALA

“ Working with the seed fertilizer in the case of maize cultivation has helped decrease production costs and workload in agricultural activities, leaving space for the introduction of additional diverse crops. This is based on an indigenous traditional technique called ‘Milpa’; which enhances the conservation of the organic matter and the protection of plantings by alternating crops. Alongside the corn, we grow beans, ayote (a variety of squash) and chili, this last one being used also as natural pesticide. ”

Angelina Chu, woman beneficiary from Guatemala



RWANDA

“ The JP RWEE supported us with the installation of greenhouses to grow tomatoes, alongside with the support of an agronomist. They have helped us to make more efficient use of water in face of droughts and have also increased crop quality and yields due to the absence of toxic pesticides residues and better overall soil quality. We now are able to grow more tomatoes and sell them at a higher price; it has been life changing. ”

Josephine Mushimiyimana, woman beneficiary from Rwanda

ICTs AND INNOVATION

Over the past decades the world has witnessed how the digital revolution has transformed the way people obtain information, connect and perform transactions with one another. Information and communications technologies (ICTs) - which include devices, networks, services and applications - reach an impressive number of people in the most remote locations, allowing for the opportunity to make information and resources accessible to social groups that have been systematically marginalized and excluded. Facilitating rural women's access to ICTs enhances their access to resources, services and networks, representing a huge opportunity to foster rural development in innovative ways.

Recognizing this, the JP RWEE has used ICTs to provide capacity strengthening and access to mobile-based services and to develop platforms for connecting farmers to local and regional supply chains. As a result, rural women from JP RWEE implementing countries have gained access to mobile financial services, increased market access through a digital platform, effective weather information through a mobile application and network building through community journalism and social media.



KYRGYZSTAN

“ We were provided with trainings on how to repair mobile phones so that we could be able to start our own business for the provision of this service. Thanks to seed capital from a revolving fund, we could start our businesses while applying the new skills acquired in a field we didn't know was possible.

”

Woman beneficiary from Kyrgyzstan



RWANDA

“ I joined the JP RWEE and received a welcome message for joining the Buy from Women (BFW) platform, which shaped many aspects within our cooperative. For instance, it helped us to understand land mapping and therefore know the exact size for my arable land plots, the amount of inputs needed and expected production. The platform also connected us to markets and finance information through the digital platform’.

”

Modesta Mujarwariya, woman beneficiary from Rwanda

1. Currently 3,200 farmers are registered on the Buy from Women platform, each with an individual profile that highlights their land size, production forecasts, contracts, loans, sales, inputs and crop life cycles.



LIBERIA

“ Most market women were afraid of saving money on their phones using mobile money. But now I have been able to succeed in making the market women understand the importance of using mobile banking for managing savings and several financial transactions. Customers now trust the services at my kiosks for mobile money transactions. In addition, I am also able to generate incomes for myself and my family.

Ruth Jallah, woman beneficiary from Liberia

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GENDER ROLES

Gender roles remain a universal social burden for rural women. Despite cultural differences, heavy demands are still placed on them to maintain certain social norms and meet public expectations regarding their behaviour, domestic responsibilities and decision making power, among other things. At the same time they often don't get the support that they need from their families or society and must continue to try to meet their responsibilities under adverse conditions and without recognition of the social, economic and political relevance of their duties.

The JP RWEE recognizes the relevance of this issue and has adopted groundbreaking approaches in order to open up the conversation about gender roles. Noting that the kind of structural barriers involved cannot be addressed without the engagement of society as a whole, men and boys have been actively involved in the discussion. For instance, one of the approaches taken by the JP RWEE is the implementation of the Gender Action Learning System (GALS); a community-led empowerment methodology that is used to promote more equitable gender relations and a fairer distribution of the workload between women and men. By addressing intra household dynamics and strengthening community engagement, the JP RWEE challenges constraining gender roles.



ETHIOPIA

“ My wife and I have been married for over twenty years, but I just recently became aware of my wife's work overload with household and childcare chores, alongside her support at the farm. Before, I never considered that I could help with the house work; since I was brought up thinking that these chores belong to the women and girls. After my wife and I attended the JP RWEE's awareness sessions on gender relations and roles, my attitude has changed and now we share household chores. As the village chairman, I will use my role to teach other men and women about gender roles. Change starts from our household, where my wife and I will make sure to bring up our boys and girls equally so that they will contribute to make the future community even better. ”

Messay Tibebe, husband of Tsehay Regassa, beneficiary from Ethiopia



RWANDA

“ Through the JP RWE activities, I have gained a lot more confidence after being elected president of our cooperative. My husband is very proud of it, as he recognizes the capacity of women to lead and considers it an honour for our family. Since the cooperative management is quite time consuming, my husband is supporting me at home by taking care of the house chores.

Josephine Mushimiyimana,
woman beneficiary from Rwanda

”



GUATEMALA

“ After attending sessions on gender awareness, my husband has been very supportive of me. Together we decided that my role in the community as a leader was of great importance. He supports me when I have to go out of town to acquire new knowledge.

”

Zoila Moran,
woman beneficiary from Guatemala



KYRGYZSTAN

“ My husband became involved with the GALS methodology recently and, since then, mutual understanding has begun to grow within the family and we have become more collaborative with each other. Now my husband is helping me with my business. Specifically, he helps to purchase materials for our shop, collects money from our wholesalers and, sometimes, he even helps me to cut sewing materials.

”

Zhania Kochkonova,
woman beneficiary from Kyrgyzstan

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Women's rights issues remain a critical global challenge. Working towards increased women's rights is at the core of the JP RWEE. Across the seven implementing countries, several activities have been undertaken in order to advocate women's rights, ranging from ending child marriage and fighting gender-based violence to securing equal access to education and sexual and reproductive health services.

Efforts have been made through the JP RWEE at both the community and the institutional level. These have included community conversation groups and specialized training at the local level and public campaigns centring on women's rights at the institutional level, reaching local government institutions, parliaments and other relevant stakeholders. Thanks to this wide arrays of activities, participating rural women have found common ground for discuss and advocating their rights. As a result, they have gained significant knowledge and awareness of their rights and feel empowered to speak out against harmful practices and abuses that they face.

GUATEMALA

“*Being the eldest of two sisters and one brother, I did not have the opportunity to attend school. My mother used to tell me that education was not important for women, so I spent my childhood helping my mother with house chores and got married when I was 15. At that age I had no desire to become a wife, but my father married me without my own approval. I have recently made up for this by undertaking different trainings that allow me to lead business with other women of my community. These trainings also taught us about our rights as women and helped us understand our role in society. We have demonstrated in the community that women can be successful outside of the household and we have even organized ourselves to march against abuses.*”

Zoila Moran, woman beneficiary from Guatemala





KYRGYZSTAN

“ Since I joined the JP RWEE, I have participated in awareness raising activities about the rights of rural women, looking at how to solve the issues women face, building their capacities and economically empowering them so that their voices would be heard.

”

Woman beneficiary from Kyrgyzstan



NEPAL

“ Being married and having kids at a young age, I could not continue my studies; it was believed in my community that education was not important for girls. Having them married to a good family was the priority. As a result, before I joined the JP RWEE, I lacked confidence. But as I got involved in the JP RWEE, my level of confidence increased. Before participating in the project activities, I could not express my needs and rights openly but these days I am comfortable speaking in front of my community leaders and standing out for myself and other women. ”

Mina Devi, woman beneficiary from Nepal

LIBERIA

“ While attending business skills classes, I was able to understand my rights as a woman and what to do in case of abuse; how to demand justice. This training was eye opening for me, and today I have the knowledge and the skills to discuss and address issues affecting the women in my village. We now feel confident to report cases of abuse and know how to do it; we are crossing the borders for trading purposes, having the self-confidence as traders and as rural women. ”

Mriama Kpah,
woman beneficiary from Liberia





NIGER

“ Our club gives great importance to the conditions of women. The subjects we discuss most often are household violence against women, family planning, forced and early marriage, girls' right to education and visits to health centres. Increasingly, we are seeing that girls are feeling more involved in the decisions about their marriage and are having a choice of when and whom to marry.

Malam Koira, woman beneficiary from Niger

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LAND ACCESS

Restricted access to land tenure is a major obstacle for rural women's economic opportunities; affecting the profitability of agriculture as a commercial activity and limiting the potential for land use in attaining food security and nutrition for entire households. Furthermore, the lack of land ownership as a collateral, prevents rural women from accessing credit, further perpetrating their economic disadvantage. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women estimates that worldwide only 20 percent of rural land owners are women.

Since its inception, the JP RWEE has promoted and supported rural women's access to land at various levels, from advocating with local and national governments for the preparation of land acts and engagement in the promotion of joint land certification to providing loans for land acquisition. Furthermore, the Programme has facilitated the participation of women beneficiaries in land committees, engaging them in the leadership of land management.

LIBERIA

“ Thanks to the JP RWEE's sensitization on the Land Rights Act, I got to understand my rights on land tenure and was able to become strong enough to go out and to talk to people in my community about land rights. I therefore put together my own group called Bassa Women Development Association (BAWODA), focused on talking about women's land rights and land palaver issues in towns and villages. ”

Martha S. Karnga, woman beneficiary from Liberia



NIGER

“ Individual access to small plots has not been a major problem but ensuring control of and/or access to larger areas has always required influence or financial resources. We, as women, very rarely inherit land. Thanks to the sessions in listening clubs we have become more aware of our rights on purchasing and inheriting lands. More and more, we are starting to have land access. ”

Woman beneficiary from Niger



RWANDA

“ I grow and commercialize tomatoes in the greenhouses provided by the JP RWEE. Our group has largely benefitted from the recent access to lands from Sake Sector. We started informally with no land of our own, but in 2015 the sector provided us with one hectare of land, enabling us to actively engage in production activities including a kitchen garden, a compost heap, the greenhouse for the group, a nursery bed and maize growing. In early 2018, we received an extra 2.5 ha of land purchased to manage so that we can expand our activities.

Cecile Mukamazi, woman beneficiary from Rwanda

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SUSTAINABLE INCOMES AND LIVELIHOODS

One of the leading pillars of the JP RWEE is the creation, support and development of rural-women-led enterprises, which foster income opportunities and consequently enhance livelihoods. In this regard, several activities have been undertaken with the aim of contributing to the elimination of structural barriers to women's engagement in economic activities. They are the strengthening of rural women's entrepreneurial skills, the provision of technology for increased production, the promotion of women's participation in the formal labour market, the use of household methodologies for a fairer distribution of unpaid care work, the establishment of revolving funds for access to capital and increased market exposure and linkages. All of these measures allow rural women to obtain resources that they can invest to improve their and their families' lives.

Across the seven participating countries, specific methodologies for creating or strengthening savings and loan groups have been implemented; over 16,000 rural women have benefitted from village savings and loan associations (in Guatemala, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda), self-help groups (Kyrgyzstan) and rural savings and credit cooperatives (Ethiopia). The amounts generated from savings are reinvested in education and health and used either as safety nets or to initiate and strengthen individual and group income-generating activities.

ETHIOPIA

“When I was running my business on the street, earnings were limited to the daily 'hand to mouth' income. After receiving trainings and a small loan, I have been able to enhance my business. Today I am earning more and am capable to recognize the profit I am making. This income increase has changed my family's livelihood; I have been able to start sending my children to school. Moreover, I have built a better house in town, purchased and installed a house cooling system to cope with the hot weather.”

Ila Robale, woman beneficiary from Ethiopia



GUATEMALA

“ I enjoy coming to the farm to raise the chickens. I now have a good monthly average income for the sale of the eggs. We are a group of women who work together as a team, in a very organized way. This has allowed me to afford the studies of my three children. I acknowledge that as a citizen I can contribute to the development of my community. ”

Marta Siquic Cucul,
woman beneficiary from Guatemala



LIBERIA

“ Thanks to the JP RWEE I was able to complete the literacy classes and began attending business classes. Once I was able to apply these learnings, I saw considerable improvements in my charcoal business, as I started bringing in 25 to 50 bags of charcoal in a pick-up truck instead of the 2 bags I used to bring for sale by transporting them on my head. My business grew and so did my income, which has allowed the life quality of my family to improve. ”

Tina Tuonyon, woman beneficiary from Liberia

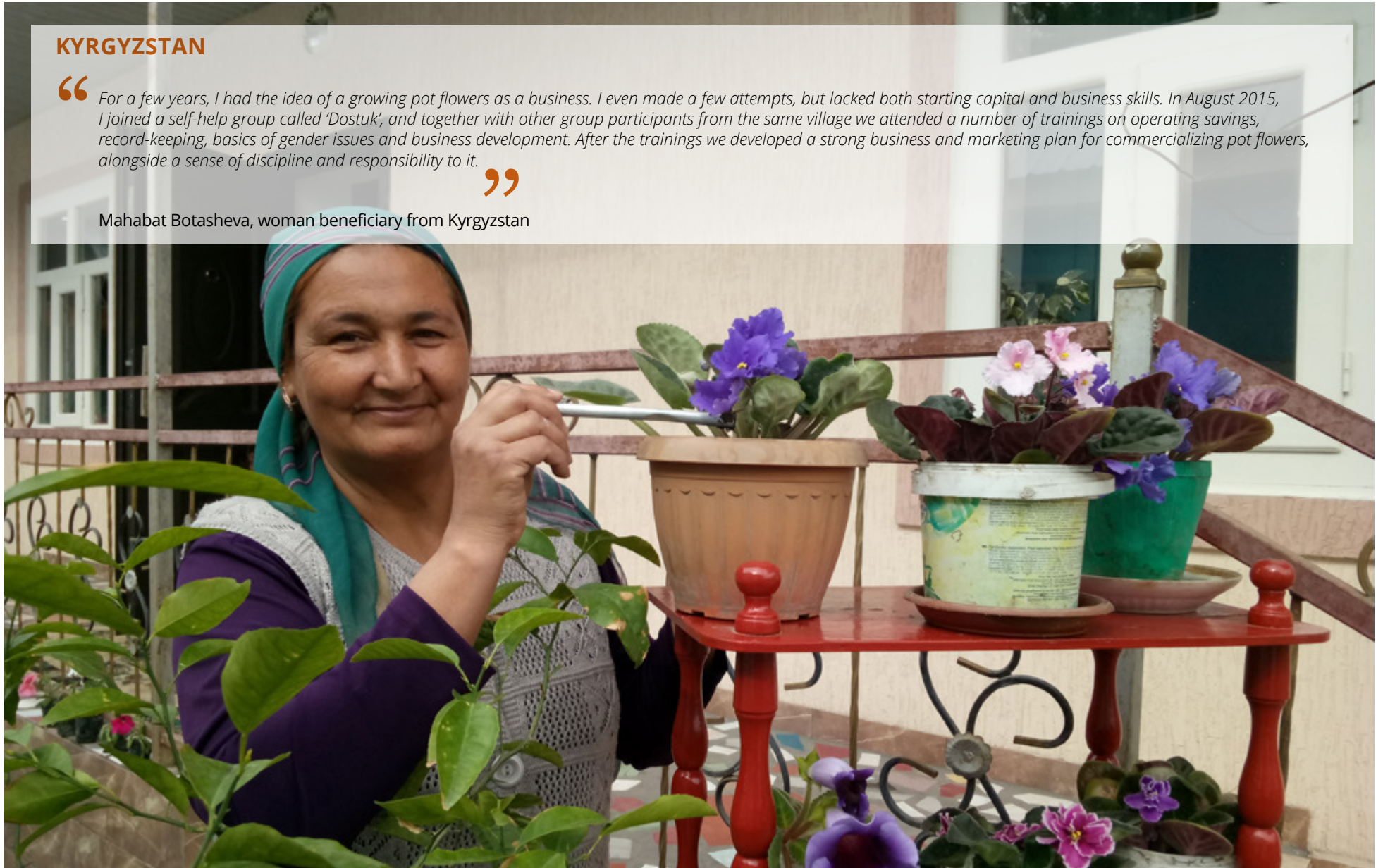


KYRGYZSTAN

“ For a few years, I had the idea of growing pot flowers as a business. I even made a few attempts, but lacked both starting capital and business skills. In August 2015, I joined a self-help group called ‘Dostuk’, and together with other group participants from the same village we attended a number of trainings on operating savings, record-keeping, basics of gender issues and business development. After the trainings we developed a strong business and marketing plan for commercializing pot flowers, alongside a sense of discipline and responsibility to it.

”

Mahabat Botasheva, woman beneficiary from Kyrgyzstan



NIGER

“ Being married and having kids at a young age, I could not continue my studies; it was believed in my community that eAs part of the provision of small ruminant kits, I received two goats that then became five. One of these goats was taken as a contribution for the revolving fund. I was able to generate additional income by selling three of the remaining goats and re-investing the money on an ox to generate more income. I am extremely grateful for the resources received and now I have a vision to keep increasing the livelihood opportunities for my family. Moreover, the additional access to small loans changed our view on how to foster new sources of incomes. ”

Binta Moutari, woman beneficiary from Niger



RWANDA

“ Thanks to a small loan I could buy cassava roots and bring them to the milling machine that our cooperative is operating through the JP RWEE program. There we started to produce flour for sales. I also acquired 5kg of fertilizer for our maize field. We harvested more than 700 kg of maize, of which we sold half for a good price. Prior to receiving the trainings our harvest was less than 100 kg. Afterwards, in order to diversify the production of the cooperative, we bought Irish potato seeds and chickens who lay eggs. Already, we have been able to repay most of the loan. ”

Alphonsine Nyirabagenzi,
woman beneficiary from Rwanda



NEPAL

“ We now work together to generate income for us and our families. For example, I use the money I earn to afford several activities including my children's school fees, paying loans and fulfilling household necessities. This wouldn't have been possible without the collaborative effort we have made through collective farming and marketing, skills we were able to access through the JP RWEE. ”

Woman beneficiary from Nepal

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP



ETHIOPIA

“The support is a turning point in effectively empowering the women and in making it the norm that women can benefit and own assets equal to men. For example, children and youth in the community used to refer to assets, such as livestock, owned by the family, as ‘my father’s sheep’ and ‘my father’s goats’. Today, they are saying ‘my mother’s sheep’, ‘my mother’s goats’. This leads to a long-term change that will continue to impact future generations.”

Alima Bakuye,
woman beneficiary from Ethiopia

Around the world rural women face structural barriers that impede their capacity to assume positions of leadership and influence at the household, community and government levels. These barriers impede women’s access to primary education and the development of soft skills, their participation in local government councils and their ability to occupy management positions in business organizations.

The JP RWEE has undertaken several activities in order to foster rural women’s leadership. These include but are not limited to the facilitation of access to primary education and vocational training, the strengthening of self-confidence and leadership skills, the promotion of participation in producer organizations and the leveraging of rural women’s voices and influence in key policy processes. A key component for ensuring systematic positive change in women’s leadership has been the promotion and facilitation of community dialogues at the local and national levels that allow rural women to raise their voices and have a say on relevant issues.

“I frequently think of how I started from scratch on leadership skills and how now I have become a successful businesswoman and a cooperative leader. Thanks to the recent encouragement and experience, I now believe that I am a role model for women and that they will follow my steps towards success.”

Maria Mohammed,
woman beneficiary from Ethiopia

GUATEMALA

“ At the beginning I felt frustrated and I felt unable to lead a group. In my heart I had a lot of fear and constantly questioned if I would be able to get the group of female companions ahead and if would get in trouble. Today with great confidence I can say that everything has been worth it and I am no longer afraid. I can see the different opportunities for the group of 14 women and for myself; we have changed our way of life by using the knowledge received about our rights and duties. As a leader of the organization I urge all my colleagues to put our knowledge into practice, since only we have the power to transform our own reality.”

”

Aurelia Chocoj,
woman beneficiary from Guatemala



KYRGYZSTAN

“ I used to be a mere housewife, sitting at home, doing chores around the house, taking care of my children and husband. Within the JP RWEE, I was trained together with other 1,500 rural women on leadership skills and learned to do effective business. After a while I became more economically independent, gained power in decision making at household level, learned to socialize. I got more independence. Since then my view of life changed, as I realized that I can also make a difference, not only within the family but in my community and the society in general. Soon after people got to know me, I realized my potential and believed in myself and I decided to run for local elections. In 2016 I was elected as a deputy of a local council in my village.”

”

Nuriya Temirbek, woman beneficiary from Kyrgyzstan



NEPAL

“ We used to think that we were less competent than men; however, the knowledge and skills we acquired through different activities such as kitchen gardening, construction of assets and leadership training made us realize that women are equally competent. Most importantly, we were provided the opportunity to take the lead role in all these activities. In other words, we put ourselves in the driving seat. ”

Woman beneficiary from Nepal



NIGER

“ We wanted to move ahead because we were very confident in our abilities. For this reason, we decided to transform our listening club into a formal producer organization, and I was elected as the chair of it. We then decided to join the union at municipal level (Madda Ben), and during the renewal of the board I was elected to a position of responsibility. I am currently the treasurer of the union of producer organizations, and in the name of my fellow sisters, who elected me, I play an active role in the institution's decision-making.”

Hadiza Seyni, woman beneficiary from Niger and leader of the Dimitra Club

RWANDA

“ After joining the cooperative, I managed to make friends and interact with other women in a way I wasn't able to do before. Being able to discuss relevant issues with other women was eye opening. I started taking better care of myself and was less concerned with what others would think of me. I increased my level of confidence and I can now easily speak in front people, which was not the case before.”

Clementine,
woman beneficiary from Rwanda



VALUE CHAINS

Value chains refer to the integrated sequence of inputs² required to develop any product; at the same time, it describes the significance of each of the stakeholders involved in the value-adding activities. To date, unfortunately, gender and specifically the role of women remain aspects of global value chains that are often overlooked. Across the various stages of value chains women continue to face barriers that limit their participation, access to capital and fair remuneration and the development of their decision making and negotiating capacities, among other things. Addressing these barriers can transform women's roles in various productive sectors, catalyse their empowerment and foster local economic growth.

Across the seven participating countries, the JP RWEE has enhanced rural women's value chain participation through the provision of productive capital and seed funding coupled with the development of the corresponding skills. As a consequence, rural women have been able to develop traditional and non-traditional value-added products in economically, socially and environmentally sustainable ways, generating broad-based benefits for the community at the various stages of the products' value chains.

2. Inputs can include, but are not limited to, products, knowledge and information, finance, payments and the social capital needed to organize producers and communities.

GUATEMALA

“ Thanks to the JP RWEE we have been able to receive inputs and capacity building for producing honey bees for sale, which has allowed us to access different markets, something that we have never done before. From the way we process the honey to how it is bottled and presented, it is a whole process executed with much thought. ”

Petrona Caal Ichoc,
woman beneficiary from Guatemala



KYRGYZSTAN

“ We understood that what makes our product unique is the milk processing technology and what we can obtain from it. The technology ensures the safety of food for customers through live microorganisms that are used as yeast in processing. Our products are very different from our competitors', not only in quality, but also in the sustainability of the process. Now we know how to make more money by promoting the idea of food safety and healthy nutrition without chemicals or artificial microbacteria. We have gained new opportunities to generate additional income, using local resources that we did not know before. ”

Zhiydegul Mavlyanov,
woman beneficiary from Kyrgyzstan



LIBERIA

“ I used to just sell my raw cassava after the harvest, same as for the rice. However, now I have learned that we can process flour from rice and that we are able to develop different products from cassava. We can even make cassava chips and package them properly for selling in the market. I am now able to receive higher income than when they were sold raw.

Woman beneficiary from Liberia ”

IMPROVED NUTRITION

Based on extensive global evidence, rural women's empowerment has been broadly recognized as an important pathway for improving household nutritional status. Particularly in contexts in which farming is the primary source of income, rural women's empowerment is important to ensuring health. As a result, women are true mediators between food production and food consumption, playing a key role in food production and consumption choices, intra-household resource allocation, maternal health and infant feeding practices.

One of the pillars of the JP RWEE is a commitment to improving the nutritional status of targeted women and their households through the promotion of more diverse diets rich in proteins, fruits and vegetables and not dependent on staple foods. This is mainly achieved through the development and operation of livestock banks and home gardens. Furthermore, acknowledging that increased and more diverse food production does not by itself guarantee improved nutritional status, nutrition services have also been at the core of nutrition-oriented activities under the JP RWEE. These include capacity building activities to guarantee the best utilization of food (including the preparation of healthy meals and healthy and hygienic food handling practices) and knowledge about the value of local food products, thus promoting their consumption.

KYRGYZSTAN

“ During the JP RWEE training we were asked to analyse our daily diets; then we realized that we mainly cooked pilaf rice, fried pasta and potatoes and that our children were also accustomed to this diet of eating almost no vegetables, fruits or meat. Simply, we did not have a custom of preparing salads or eating animal protein; therefore, I constantly had high blood pressure along with anaemia. After the JP RWEE training our family began to breed laying hens. We started cooking healthy dishes from eggs and also selling them, being able to obtain cash to buy more varieties of rich and healthy food. ”

Dzhurabaeva Kuzduzhan, woman beneficiary from Kyrgyzstan





GUATEMALA

“ *Understanding that our own crop diversity is also a source of nourishment for us has been crucial. We have learned how to prepare meals and utilize our traditional foods in a way that takes advantage of their nutritional properties. The recipe books developed with the JP RWEE have helped on how to give nutritious meals to our family while keeping our traditions.* ”

Woman beneficiary from Guatemala

NEPAL

“ Before I was able to grow using home gardens, my children used to have just dry wheat for breakfast. Now I feed them rice, lentils and the vegetables I grow. Sometimes I sell the vegetables in the market and with the money I can also feed them chicken and goat meat. ”

Santa,
woman beneficiary from Nepal



RWANDA

“ The training on nutrition was eye opening for me, I learned that what we consume has an impact on our health, the education of our kids and our life expectancy. Since then, I have changed my cooking habits to include vegetables and animal proteins as much as possible. When the sector office requested someone who could volunteer to host an early child development centre, I decided to do so. Since then, more than 30 children gather at my house with their mothers, so we can together prepare a healthy meal and we get milk to feed the children. In that same platform, we discuss together how to implement good breast-feeding practices and habits as well as other nutrition matters. ”

Francine Mukazayire,
woman beneficiary from Rwanda



NIGER

“ I was one of the first women beneficiaries receiving the small ruminant kits distributed as part of the JP RWEE. Through time, we have been able to increase the number of available cattle, which has not only provided us with increased incomes but also has provided us with their meat. We are now able to consume more animal protein, and therefore eat more diverse healthy diets.

”

Mallam Koira,
woman beneficiary from Niger



Photocredits

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THE FACES OF EMPOWERMENT

A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY



Rural women are key agents in the effort to achieve the economic, environmental and social transformations required for sustainable development. Limited access to credit, health care and education are among the many challenges they face, and these challenges have been aggravated by recent economic and food crises as well as climate change.

Ensuring the empowerment of rural women is key not only to the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities but also to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



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JOINT PROGRAMME ON:
**Accelerating Progress towards the
Economic Empowerment of Rural Women**

