

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



**World Food Programme**



**IFAD**  
INTERNATIONAL  
FUND FOR  
AGRICULTURAL  
DEVELOPMENT



# UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF RURAL WOMEN IN ETHIOPIA

## KEY RESULTS AND HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

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## About the programme

The Joint Programme on “Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women” (RWEE JP) in Ethiopia is a five-year programme being implemented by the Government of Ethiopia in partnership with UN Women, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). As the sub-component of the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Joint Programme, the RWEE JP in Ethiopia was launched in 2014, aiming at accelerating progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women in two pilot regions, Afar and Oromia. The overall goal is to secure rural women’s livelihoods and rights in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in line with Ethiopia’s Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II).

With over 2,000 direct beneficiaries of smallholder rural women farmers and agro-pastoralists, the programme is making a difference to more than 14,000 family members. The initiative is also indirectly benefiting 32,000 community members (17,000 women and 15,000 men). The rural women farmers are members of Rural Saving and Credit Cooperative Organizations and are involved in production of *teff* (the staple grain in the country), wheat, maize, onion, tomato, and other vegetables.

The programme capitalizes on the mandate and comparative advantages of the partnering UN agencies to generate a long-lasting and wide-scale improvement in the livelihoods and rights of rural women in Ethiopia. It works to achieve four outcomes: improving food security and nutrition of rural women; increasing their income to sustain their livelihoods; enhance their leadership and participation in their communities’ development; and securing a gender-responsive policy environment for the economic empowerment of the rural women.

The programme, with a total budget of over 3 million USD, is supported by the government of Spain through the Sustainable Development Goals Fund (SDG-F), the government of Sweden, and the government of Norway.

*PHOTO BELOW: Ms. Kedija Wako, from the Adamiyulu district, provides water to the livestock she purchased using a loan provided through the programme.*





# OVERVIEW OF OUTCOMES



PHOTO ABOVE: Rural women celebrate their achievements during the graduation ceremony of a training on basic business skills in the Yaya Gulele district.

## FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION



Rural women improve their food security and nutrition.

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## INCREASED INCOME



Rural women increase their income to sustain their livelihoods.

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## STRONGER LEADERSHIP



Rural women have enhanced leadership and participation in their communities and in rural institutions, with the capacity to shape laws, policies and programmes.

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## GENDER- RESPONSIVE POLICY



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

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# RURAL WOMEN IMPROVE THEIR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION



*PHOTO ABOVE: Ms. Medina Gobena, a beneficiary in Dodola district, collects spinach from improved seedlings from her garden for her family's consumption.*



Among the factors that make rural women and their families vulnerable to food insecurity and its consequences is a limited access to productive resources, skills, finance and information, together with an inability to build resilience by diversifying their work and build up assets.

Rural women play a critical role in the agricultural sector. Securing their livelihoods and rights is the pathway to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) in Ethiopia. Therefore the enhancement of rural women's food security and nutrition is a key outcome of the Joint Programme on Rural Women Economic Empowerment.

Under this outcome, the programme aims to ensure that rural women have increased access to and control over resources, assets and services critical to their food and nutrition security.

The programme also supports rural women to gain greater capacity to enhance and control local food security reserves. The main activities which aim to benefit rural women under this outcome are:

- Creation of access to agricultural inputs;
- Provision of trainings on control and management of local household food reserves, cropping, small-scale irrigation practices and rearing and fattening of livestock;
- Promotion of good nutrition practices including diet diversity.



*PHOTO TO THE LEFT: One of the programme's beneficiaries displays honey, which she brought from the rural area for sale during the Addis Ababa market linkage exhibition supported by the programme.*





## KEY RESULTS:

82%

OF THE TARGETED RURAL WOMEN  
ARE ABLE TO ACCESS  
**AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION**  
RELATED TRAININGS

OVER 760

RURAL WOMEN ARE PROVIDED WITH  
**IMPROVED GRAIN, VEGETABLES**  
AND **APPLE SEEDLINGS**

500

RURAL WOMEN ARE PROVIDED WITH  
**AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES**  
INCLUDING MAIZE SHELLERS, WATER PUMPS  
AND TRACTORS

THE TARGETED RURAL WOMEN  
ENHANCED THEIR CAPACITIES OF HOUSEHOLD  
**FOOD RESERVE MANAGEMENT,**  
WHICH INDIRECTLY ENHANCES THEIR  
FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY



“As a result of the El niño caused drought in 2015, last year I harvested only 50 kg of maize, almost nothing compared to the normal amount of 4 quintals. In 2016, after ploughing the land with my own pair of oxen, which I purchased with the loan received from the programme and getting sufficient amount of rain, I harvested 7 quintals. I have already sold 1 quintal for 400 Birr (17 USD) to cover my two daughters’ education expenses. I keep 4 quintals for the family’s consumption and will sell the remaining when the price gets higher”.

- Ms. Ila Robale, widowed mother of five who benefits from the programme



PHOTO TO THE LEFT: :  
Ms. Ila Robale, a beneficiary from the Adamitulu district, demonstrates how she used to plough after her husband’s death. Before the programme’s support, she used to rent an ox. Now she has her own pair of oxen.

## RURAL WOMEN INCREASE INCOME TO SECURE THEIR LIVELIHOOD



PHOTO ON TOP: Rural women receive cash from sale of their products during the Addis Ababa market linkage exhibition supported by the programme.



Some of the factors that have been hindering rural women from increasing their income to secure their livelihoods include: weak institutional structures to support women's cooperatives and micro-finance institutions, lack of integrating gender into

the planning and implementation of activities to support women, and low numbers of women in the leadership of such institutions.

The Joint Programme's outcome on increasing rural women's income to secure their livelihood focuses on enhancing women's capacity to produce goods with diversified access to local markets. Creating market linkages for women cooperatives, facilitating rural women's access to holistic income-generating facilities, and supporting the improvement of gender-sensitive financial and non-financial services are some of the activities being implemented under this outcome.

The programme contributes to increasing access to productive resources (land and agricultural inputs) through technical assistance to individual women and women's associations to benefit from the ongoing governmental joint land certification process. A revolving fund has been established alongside technical support on basic business and entrepreneurship skills. In addition, time- and labour-saving equipment was given to the women to further support their businesses.

Various capacity-building trainings on how to mainstream gender and conduct gender audits have been given to rural saving and credit cooperative organizations, women associations, bureau of agriculture and livestock, bureau of women and children, bureau of education, and cooperative promotion agencies. These enabled the institutions to contribute to the diversification of the targeted women's income generation activities and to the improvement of theirs and their families livelihoods.



PHOTO ABOVE: A beneficiary from the Yaya Gulele district scales sunflower seeds for sale during the market linkage exhibition in Addis Ababa.





## KEY RESULTS:

**RURAL WOMEN'S ACCESS  
TO GENDER-SENSITIVE FINANCIAL  
AND NON-FINANCIAL SERVICES  
INCREASED.**

THIS INCLUDED THE ESTABLISHMENT  
AND MANAGEMENT OF A  
**REVOLVING FUND,**  
WHICH ENABLED OVER  
**1,700 RURAL WOMEN**  
TO ACCESS STARTUP CAPITAL RANGING FROM  
4,306 BIRR TO 10,500 BIRR (~183-446 USD)

**900**  
RURAL WOMEN WERE ABLE TO  
**DIVERSIFY  
THEIR SOURCE OF INCOME**

**600**  
RURAL WOMEN HAVE A  
**BANK ACCOUNT**  
WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE  
**COOPERATIVE OFFICES**  
OF THE TARGETED DISTRICTS WITH  
SAVING BALANCES RANGING  
FROM 400 BIRR TO 3,000 BIRR (~17-130 USD)

**CREATED MARKET LINKAGES**  
FOR WOMEN RURAL SAVING AND  
CREDIT COOPERATIVE ORGANIZATION WITH  
14 MEMBERS THROUGH AN EXHIBITION  
CONDUCTED IN ADDIS ABABA



"When I received over 6,200 Birr (310USD) as a loan in July 2016, I purchased a pregnant milking cow, ready to give birth, for 5,100 Birr (255USD). I bought nutritious livestock feed (Fagulo) and kept feeding it together with the by-products of the wheat harvest from our farm. In less than a month, it gave birth to a female calf. Since it is a local breed, I started to get 4 litres of milk per day.

In August of the same year, I began to supply three-fourths of the milk to two households in the village. Monthly, each household has been paying me 180 Birr (6 USD). I have been using the remaining milk for the family's consumption.

If it was not for this milk, I would have been spending more cash to purchase milk for the family's consumption. Before, I never saved income from the sale of milk. Now, I have opened a bank book and saved 1100 Birr (55 USD), which I will not use for any other purposes rather than expanding the milk business. After saving enough, my plan is to purchase another milking cow and increase the supply".

- Ms. Safaya Kabato, one of the programme's beneficiaries

PHOTO ON TOP: Ms. Safaya Kabato, one of the programme's beneficiaries, smiles at her granddaughter drinking milk.



## RURAL WOMEN STRENGTHEN THEIR VOICE IN DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR LIVES

PHOTO ABOVE: The rural women actively participate during one of the programme's related meetings in the Yaya Gulele district.



Rural women's lack of power to decide and influence the community due to an absence of membership in economic and social groups, a lack of comfort in public speaking, and an absence of decision-making power over productive resources are among the

main factors that result in their disempowerment.

This has contributed to limiting the rural women's potential to play a transformative role in the country's economy in general and the agricultural sector in particular.

To enhance decision-making power of the targeted rural women, the activities under the outcome focus on strengthening the rural women's voices in decisions that affect their lives. Activities that enhance the rural women's confidence and leadership skills to fully participate in rural institutions, cooperatives and unions alongside sensitization of the targeted women and their spouses on gender development and women's rights have been strategically implemented. This contributed in households' and agricultural resources to be accessed and controlled by the women.

### KEY RESULTS:

OVER 3,000 MEN AND WOMEN  
WERE ADDRESSED TO  
**CHANGE THEIR ATTITUDES**  
TOWARDS GENDER ISSUES THROUGH LEADERSHIP  
TRAININGS, EXPOSURE VISITS, COMMUNITY  
CONVERSATIONS AND AWARENESS-RAISING  
CAMPAIGNS

ABOUT 500  
OF THE TARGETED RURAL WOMEN IN THE  
**OROMIA REGION**  
ARE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN  
**HOUSEHOLD DECISION-MAKING**  
THAT INCLUDES SELLING OF ASSETS LIKE LIVESTOCK  
AND RENTING OF LAND

100  
RURAL WOMEN WORKING AS LEADERS  
IN ADMINISTRATION, AUDIT AND IN THEIR  
COOPERATIVES' COMMITTEES





“My wife and I have been married for over twenty years. I have been aware that my wife gets overloaded with household work taking care of the family including our five children. This is alongside her support at the farm. Before, I never considered that I could be a help by doing some of the house work. Because I was brought up knowing the house work belong to the women and girls. After my wife and myself attended the awareness creation sessions on gender relations and roles, my attitude has changed. Now, for example, when she bakes the traditional bread, *injera*, I cook, the stew, *wat*. Before, I used to go to the market alone to purchase or to sell livestock, now we go together. My wife has been very helpful at the market as she advises me on what a good deal is based on the basic business skills training she took through the joint programme. As the village chairman, I will use my role to teach other men and women on this. Change starts from our household, where my wife and myself will make sure to bring up our boys and girls equally so that they will contribute to make the future community even better”.

- Mr. Messay Tibebe Markos, the husband of Ms. Tsehay Regassa, one of the programme's beneficiaries



**PHOTOS FROM THE TOP:**

*Ms. Seru Ulise, deputy chair of the Rural Saving and Credit Cooperative Organization in the Adamitulu district, briefs joint monitoring visitors on the programme's implementation progress.*

*Rural Women beneficiaries attend a meeting related to the programme in the Adamitulu district.*





# GENDER-RESPONSIVE POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

PHOTO ABOVE: Women in the Dodol district attend adult functional literacy training as one of the activities under the programme.



Absence of adequate institutional and organizational capacity, as well as evidence based knowledge are among the obstacles in developing effective gender-responsive policies and an institutional environment for rural women's

economic empowerment in the country. The programme initially undertook a baseline research on the socio-economic status of targeted women beneficiaries, a market assessment for their products and on appropriate technology that could be best adapted by the women.

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Federal Ministry of Women and Children Affairs have been supported by the joint programme to establish the Ethiopian Network for Gender Equality in Agriculture (ENGEA).

As a strategy for gender equality, ENGEA empowers rural women to be equal beneficiaries and change agents of agricultural transformation. By planning and implementing related activities in a coordinated manner, it aims to ensure and advocate for gender responsiveness of the agriculture sector policies, strategies and programmes using evidence based advocacy, capacity building, knowledge and information sharing.

## KEY RESULT:

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE  
ETHIOPIAN NETWORK  
FOR GENDER EQUALITY  
IN AGRICULTURE



PHOTO ABOVE: A panel discussion during the establishment of the Ethiopian Network for Gender Equality in Agriculture.



# PHOTO GALLERY



*Ms. Fate Beriso, a women's representative from the Adamtulu district, speaks about the labour and time savings that the maize sheller provides through the programme to the women's Rural Saving and Credit Cooperative.*



*Rural women in a discussion during one of the programme's joint monitoring visits in the Adamtulu district.*



*Ms. Mediya Butune, a programme's beneficiary from the Dodola district, saves in a bank the income she earned from the sale of milk.*



*Ms. Sheka Jara, a beneficiary from the Adamtulu district, feeds the livestock she purchased using the loan she received through the programme.*



*Ms. Fate Abdi in the Adamtulu district gives a service at the beauty salon she opened using part of the loan provided through the programme.*



*Rural Saving and Credit Cooperative Organizations' female members serve customers during a market linkage exhibition in Addis Ababa. Their participation was supported by the programme.*





Photo: Rural women with their certificates during the graduation ceremony of a training on basic business skills in the Yaya Gulele district.



Planet 50-50 by 2030  
Step It Up for Gender Equality

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