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World Food Programme

JOINT PROGRAMME:
Accelerating Progress towards
Rural Women's Economic Empowerment

JP RWEE
Good Practices

Phase I

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Contents

Introduction 3

Good Practices

Niger: Improving Nutrition through Community Engagement 7

Nepal: Transforming Gender Norms through the Gender Action Learning System 9

Rwanda: Supporting the Role of Households in Gender Equitable Rural Development 11

Kyrgyzstan: Promoting Innovation in Rural Women's Entrepreneurship 13

Liberia: Private Sector Partnership for Women's Financial Inclusion 15

Ethiopia: Partnering for Gender Responsive Climate Smart Agriculture 17

Guatemala: Developing Gender Responsive Rural Agricultural Services 19

Introduction

Photo: FAO Guatemala/ 2015

CONTEXT

Rural women are key agents of change who are at the forefront of agricultural production, supporting food security and nutrition. The income they generate contributes to rural economies, as well as to the health and wellbeing of their families and communities. Despite their critical role in the eradication of poverty, rural women continue to face systemic barriers that limit their access to productive resources, opportunities and services, and they carry a disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work. Rural women are predominantly excluded from decision-making structures and processes, with deeply entrenched social norms and patriarchal systems further impeding their ability to fully participate and equally benefit from economic activities.

INTRODUCTION TO THE JOINT PROGRAMME

The Joint Programme 'Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment' (JP RWEE) is implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the World Food Programme (WFP). This unique UN partnership tackles the barriers facing rural women through a holistic approach, encompassing social, economic and political domains of empowerment to create the necessary enabling environment for rural women's economic empowerment.

The JP RWEE draws on the complementary knowledge and gender expertise of the four agencies: the technical knowledge and policy assistance of FAO in food security, nutrition and climate-smart agriculture; the experience of IFAD in co-financing rural investment programmes and addressing gender inequalities at the household, organization and community levels; WFP's technical knowledge, experience and innovations in delivering food security and nutrition programming along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus; and the technical knowledge, expertise and partnerships of UN Women with global, regional and national mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Within the JP RWEE's global framework, programme design and implementation are contextualised at country level. Activities are designed through needs assessments of rural women, community engagement, and with participation from wider civil society and government stakeholders. Country programmes are closely aligned to national policies and priorities, and leverage local and national structures to create ownership, achieve sustainability and enable replication and scale up by local and national actors.

A first phase of the programme was implemented in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda from 2014 to 2021, reaching 79,626 rural women and men (64,447 women and 15,382 men) and 407,667 household members.

A second phase of the programme is being implemented in Nepal, Niger, Tanzania, Tunisia and the Pacific Islands (Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tonga) from 2022 to 2027, with a view to further scale up to additional countries.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The overarching goal of the programme is to secure rural women's livelihoods, rights and resilience in the context of sustainable development, Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. The programme has four interrelated outcome areas:

I. Improved food security and nutrition for rural women and their households that contribute to equitable and sustainable food systems;

II. Rural women's income, decent work and economic autonomy increased to secure their livelihoods and build resilience;

III. Rural women's voice and agency increased for full and equal participation and leadership in their households, communities, organizations and governance systems;

IV. Gender-responsive legal frameworks, policies and institutions strengthened to create an enabling environment for rural women to secure their livelihoods, rights and resilience.

Photo: WFP Rwanda/ 2020

PROGRAMME APPROACH

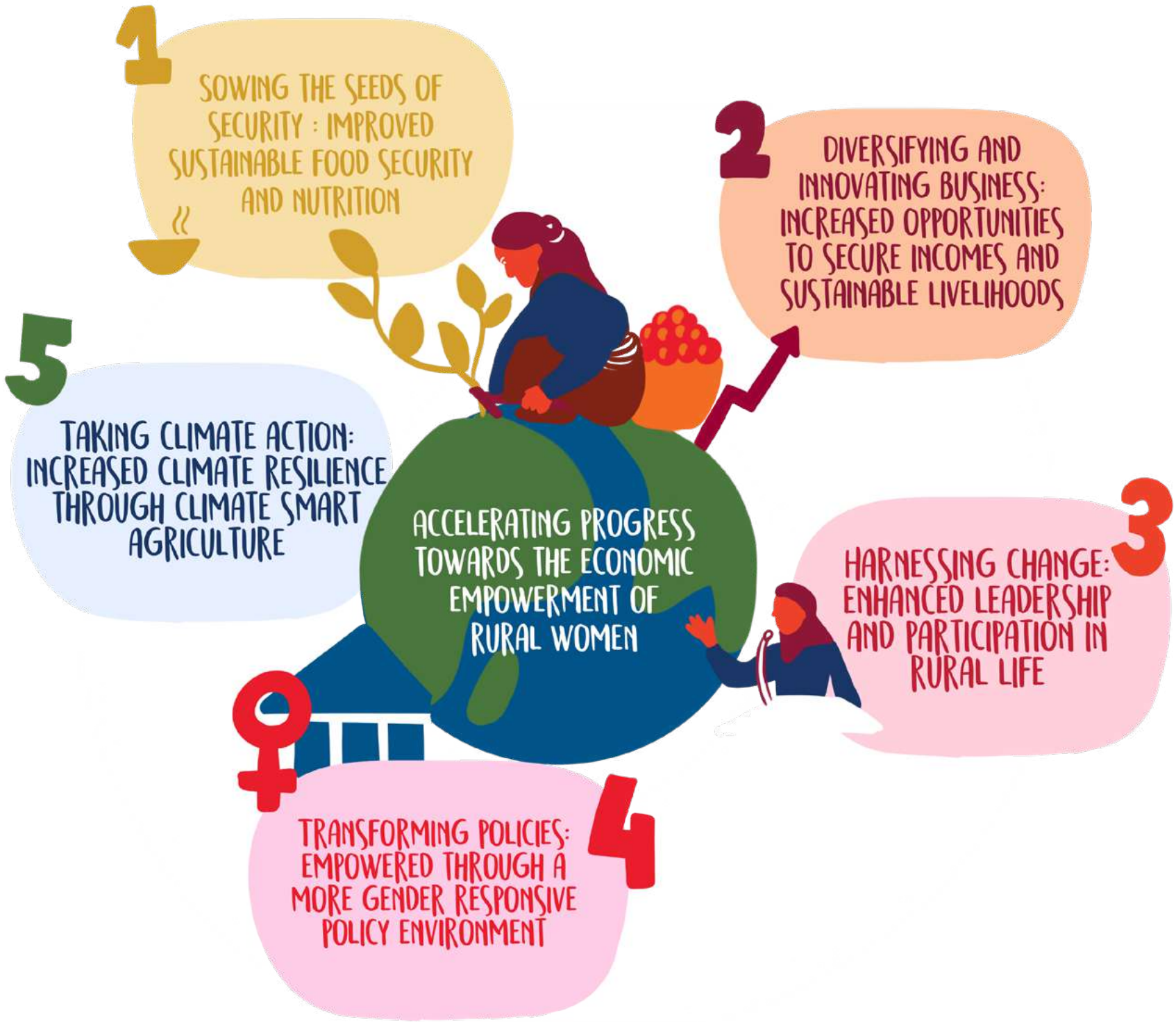
The JP RWEE adopts a number of programme strategies to achieve its goal and objectives and enhance the sustainability of the programme. These include:

- Incorporating a resilience lens to enable rural women and their households to anticipate, adapt and respond to climate change, hazards and other shocks.
- Integrating a gender-transformative lens to address unequal power dynamics and discriminatory social norms and contribute to transformative and structural change.
- Working with partners, including government, NGOs, civil society and the private sector.
- Developing individual, collective and institutional capacity to contribute to knowledge and skills transfer.
- Working with and through women's groups to enhance economic and social capital.
- Leveraging ICTs, digital agriculture and innovative solutions.
- Applying an intersectional approach to ensure that No One is Left Behind.
- Applying participatory approaches throughout the programme.

OVERVIEW OF GOOD PRACTICES

Under the first phase of the programme, a number of methodologies and approaches were piloted which contributed to establishing the JP RWEE as a well proven model for rural women's economic empowerment. This booklet shares selected good practices from each of the phase one countries on a number of thematic areas of intervention, including climate smart agriculture, nutrition, women's entrepreneurship, gender transformative approaches and gender responsive policy.

- **Niger: Improving Nutrition through Community Engagement**
- **Nepal: Transforming Gender Norms through the Gender Action Learning System**
- **Rwanda: Supporting the Role of Households in Gender Equitable Rural Development**
- **Kyrgyzstan: Promoting Innovation in Rural Women's Entrepreneurship**
- **Liberia: Private Sector Partnership for Women's Financial Inclusion**
- **Ethiopia: Partnering for Gender Responsive Climate Smart Agriculture**
- **Guatemala: Developing Gender Responsive Rural Agricultural Services**



PROGRAMME IMPACT

The Joint Programme has successfully leveraged the comparative advantages of each UN agency, alongside government institutions and local level community organizations, to holistically address the barriers to rural women's economic empowerment. The first phase of the programme (2014 – 2021) achieved substantial results across all programme outcome areas. Key results included:

- 82 percent average increase in production by rural women;
- Over USD 3,600,000 generated from sales at the individual and group levels;
- Over USD 1,900,000 mobilized through savings and loan schemes;
- On average 77 percent of Producer Organizations led by rural women;
- Increased empowerment and higher gender parity index as measured by the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI);
- More gender-equitable relations achieved within participating households;
- Gender mainstreaming incorporated into national policies and strategies;
- Reported increased resilience to the impacts of COVID-19.

IMPROVING NUTRITION THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: DIMITRA CLUBS IN NIGER

Photo: WFP Niger/ 2017

CONTEXT

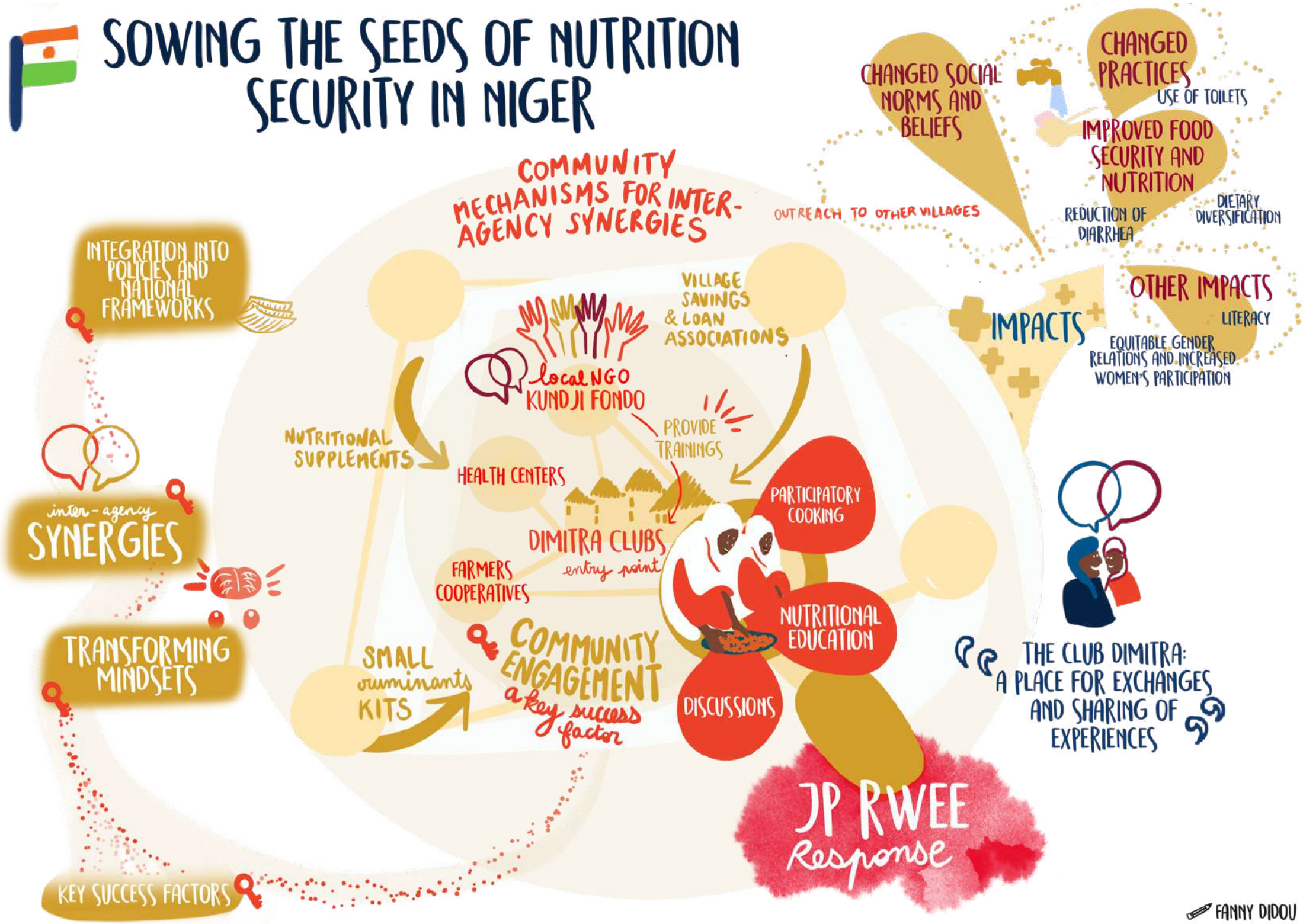
Niger, a landlocked country in the Sahel region of Sub Saharan Africa, has an overwhelmingly rural population, with 83.6% of the 24 million inhabitants living in rural areas, 49% of whom live below the poverty line. In December 2021, 2.5 million people were estimated to be food insecure due to poverty, environmental degradation and recurrent shocks. Niger is ranked 101 out of 117 countries in the 2019 Global Hunger Index and persistent gender inequality impacts food security and nutrition, as well as wider development outcomes. Discriminatory social norms are one of the root causes of malnutrition and negatively affect women and children, with 61% of children under 5 years old and 45% of pregnant women suffering from anaemia.

INTERVENTION

The JP RWEE reached 17,477 rural women and men (15,837 women and 1,640 men) and 103,114 household members in the Dosso and Maradi districts in southern Niger. The entry point for the programme at local level was the Dimitra Clubs, which are voluntary, informal groups of women, men and youth who analyse common problems, and identify and implement solutions by acting together using only local resources. The JP RWEE created and supported 120 Dimitra Clubs and 4 Communal Networks of Dimitra Clubs, with a total of 3,600 members (2,400 women/girls and 1,200 men/boys). During discussions between club members, malnutrition was identified as a barrier to improving households' livelihoods and well-being, as well as hindering community development. Dimitra Club members participated in a five-day nutrition training that enabled them to develop a comprehensive understanding of key concepts including dietary diversity, nutritional intake, hygiene, and infant and young child feeding (IYCF). Dimitra Club leaders then organized in-depth exchanges between members, which included reflection on how harmful gender norms lead to malnutrition in women and children. Over a five-month period, community members discussed key aspects of nutrition and the differing needs of men, women, boys and girls. Dimitra Club leaders also organized large and inclusive community gatherings, enabling the wider community to reflect on the ways in which certain cultural practices and traditions contribute to poor nutritional outcomes. In parallel, both women and men participated in cooking classes, using group members' knowledge to identify locally available nutritious ingredients. Livelihoods activities under the JP RWEE also supported the production of nutritious food.

KEY RESULTS

The Dimitra Clubs acted as a catalyst to changing harmful cultural practices, while strengthening social cohesion and fostering a community vision relating to the nutrition of women and children. The participation of men and political and religious leaders was critical and was facilitated by a participatory, inclusive and rights-based approach. Newly acquired knowledge on nutrition, combined with community dialogue on prevailing social norms, stimulated agreed changes in cultural practices among both men and women. For example, women are no longer prohibited from eating certain products (eggs, meat, sugar cane) and no longer have to reduce their food intake during pregnancy. Participants also acquired the ability to identify and maximise the use of locally available nutritious ingredients,



including through the development of a book of local recipes. Over the course of the programme, the average Food Dietary Diversity Score in the JP RWEE implementing areas increased from 3.49 to 4.84, which indicates better and more adequate micronutrient intake. The level of knowledge amongst programme participants increased, for instance the proportion of people aware of the importance of adequate food intake for nutritional outcomes grew from 59% to 87%. The change achieved in transforming discriminatory social norms on food consumption and nutrition was complemented by the wider results of the JP RWEE, such as increased agricultural production, livelihoods development, and increased participation and leadership of women in rural life (including leadership of Producer Organizations, Dimitra Clubs and election to local councils).

KEY MESSAGE

Involving men, boys and traditional leaders in understanding the causes of malnutrition is needed to trigger transformative change in food consumption practices and nutritional intake for women and children. The use of the participatory, community based, dialogue-centred Dimitra Clubs model enables community members to strategically approach the problem of malnutrition and take a harmonised approach to improving nutritional outcomes for women and children. Enhancing opportunities for women to meaningfully participate in community dialogue and decision-making processes is also key for achieving improved food security and nutrition for family members.

TRANSFORMING GENDER NORMS THROUGH THE GENDER ACTION LEARNING SYSTEM (GALS) IN NEPAL

CONTEXT

Nepal is home to 29.8 million people, with almost 80% of households living in rural areas and depending on subsistence agriculture as a source of livelihoods. Over 80% of women are employed in agriculture. In 2015, Nepal adopted a new constitution guaranteeing gender equality (including women's rights to lineage and equal rights in family matters and property). However, substantial progress remains to be made in tackling deep rooted gender disparities. Women's participation in rural life and institutions continues to be restricted, and deeply entrenched patriarchal social norms mean that harmful traditional practices such as child marriage, dowry practice, menstrual restrictions and restrictions on women's mobility continue. Over 32% of women aged 20 – 24 are married before the age of 18.

INTERVENTION

The JP RWEE was implemented in the Sarlahi and Rautahat districts in the southeast of Nepal and reached 3,622 rural women and 17,385 household members. The programme piloted the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) for the first time in Nepal, as a means to support the empowerment of rural women by transforming inequitable gender relations and overcoming prohibitive social norms. GALS is a community-led empowerment methodology that focuses on gender transformation at individual, household and community levels. A total of 1,569 people (1,020 women and 549 men) belonging to women's farmer groups, including illiterate women and women from marginalized ethnic groups, were trained in GALS through the use of participatory tools such as the Visioning Tool and the Gender Balance Tree tool. The latter helps women and men analyse areas of imbalance related to gender roles, such as unpaid care work or household expenditure, and to set goals for a more equitable share of responsibilities. GALS training was also used to foster female participation, leadership and representation in the community, and to equip women with the ability to challenge restrictive gender norms, including restrictions on rural women's mobility and their exclusion from non-traditional work.

Photo: UN Women Nepal/ 2017

KEY RESULTS

As women and men learned to set shared goals and engage in discussions together, they began to change their behaviour and actions to achieve the goals they set for themselves and their families. As a result of the GALS intervention, women were able to develop their confidence, make decisions about their own lives and their voice and agency increased. The GALS endline assessment revealed the following results:

- Improved self-image amongst women and a perceived change within themselves.
- Improved household relationships including a fairer division of household labour and joint decision making on issues such as productive decisions.
- The pooling of household income and increased autonomy for women in the use of income.
- Reduction in women's domestic work burden.
- Improved mobility outside of the home compared to non-GALS participants.
- Increase in women's productive agricultural work and sales of agricultural produce.

Families participating in GALS also discontinued the practice of discriminatory gender norms, such as the prioritisation of boys education over girls and

the practice of dowries. As one woman testified, *"I developed courage, I dared to ignore the ridicule of others, then my husband and children also encouraged me. Since then, I discarded my sari and blouse when farming, which was neither comfortable to work in the vegetable field nor cheap."*

Within their communities, women participating in GALS also started to emerge as local leaders, taking on leadership roles, including in cooperatives, producer organizations, ward councils and, exceptionally, a construction management committee (an area of work traditionally strictly exclusive to men). During the COVID-19 pandemic, women GALS champions successfully lobbied local authorities for gender inclusive responses to the crisis.

KEY MESSAGE

Women's social and economic empowerment can be driven through gender transformative methodologies which bring women, men and children together and lead to gender transformative change, even within deeply restrictive and conservative communities. Household-level change, focusing on women's inclusion and agency, acts as a catalyst for bringing about community-level change and increasing women's participation and leadership in communities.

SUPPORTING THE ROLE OF HOUSEHOLDS IN GENDER EQUITABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN RWANDA

Photo: WFP Rwanda/ 2020

CONTEXT

Rwanda is a small, landlocked country in East Africa with a predominantly rural population of 12 million. Its economy depends mainly on subsistence agriculture, with 89% of rural households practising small scale farming. Over 70% of working women are employed in agriculture. Whilst the country has made impressive progress in gender equality in recent years, challenges remain, with a gender gap of 67.2% in terms of women's economic participation and opportunity. Women remain marginalized from participation and decision making at the household and community levels. Rwanda has a national development strategy, Vision 2050, which includes a strategy for households to contribute to the achievement of development goals. The Rwandan tradition of *Imihigo* ('goal setting') is central to this household strategy, with each household defining annual socio-economic objectives through a performance contract with local authorities.

INTERVENTION

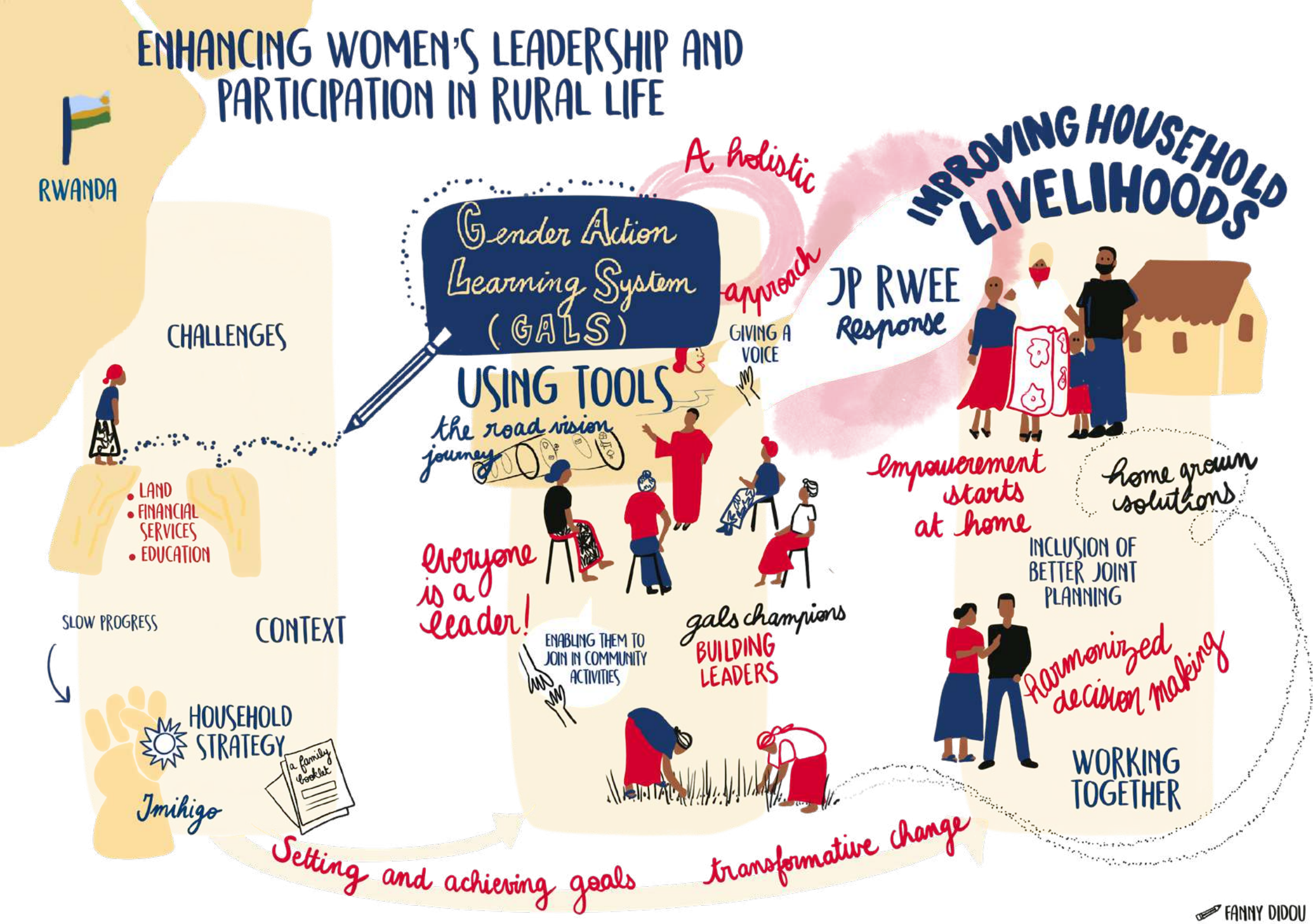
The JP RWEE worked in 8 out of 30 districts in Rwanda[1], reaching a total of 18,275 rural women and men (10,406 women and 7,869 men) and 82,237 household members. The programme identified *Imihigo* as a strategic entry point to introduce the GALS methodology at household level, in order to tackle deep rooted discriminatory social norms that prevent women's empowerment. GALS methodology promotes behaviour change and enables households to improve their ability to analyse, plan and pursue realistic and sustainable livelihood strategies, bringing about increased gender equality. In collaboration with local partners, 220 beneficiaries (190 women and 30 men) were trained in the GALS methodology and became GALS Champions. Nutrition and climate change were also integrated as topics into the GALS trainings (GALS+). Through the use of sequential visual tools and pictorial mapping, GALS enabled household members to jointly build a vision of their future and plan a strategy to achieve it, thus fostering a more inclusive and equitable decision-making process within households. Annual *Imihigo* objectives were jointly agreed. GALS was then scaled up to 4,116 community members (2,351 females and 1,765 males) through pyramid peer sharing, this included family members, church, group and cooperative members, neighbours and friends.

KEY RESULTS

The use of GALS+ generated results for improved gender equality and women's empowerment, improved nutrition and stronger capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Women raised their status, economic condition and decision-making capacity at household, group and community level. Endline results (for the implementation period 2018-2021) included:

- 91% average achievement of planned objectives (e.g. agriculture production, purchase of assets, savings).
- 100% average increase in the production and consumption of fruit and vegetables at family level.
- 92% achievement of environmental protection goals (e.g. erosion control and rain water retention).
- 211% increase in gender equality in decision making, including decisions on land and selling of produce.

1 Kirehe, Ngoma, Nyaruguru, Kamonyi, Kayonza, Rubavu, Nyagatare, and Musanze districts



- 206% increase in equal property rights including ownership of bank accounts, land and other assets.
- 215% increase in equality of movement and association, work and leisure, with women and men equally attending meetings, being in leadership positions and sharing household tasks.

Effective results were also yielded in relation to the 4,116 beneficiaries who were trained by the GALS champions. Most of these beneficiaries were found to have mapped out their household visions and tracked their progress. They were also found to have made changes in household gender relations. Both men and women were taking decisions on the use of household income, the use of land for good nutrition and environmental protection, and both were involved in household chores such as water collection and cooking.

KEY MESSAGE

GALS provided a practical methodology for guiding households in the inclusive achievement of gender equitable household and livelihoods goals. The methodology also worked as a development accelerator. Furthermore, taking advantage of *Imihigo* enabled the programme to effectively use the local governance system and engage in local level policy implementation. There is potential for GALS to be scaled up in Rwanda within the context of *Imihigo* and the grassroots implementation of national gender equality policies and strategies.

PILOTING THE BUSINESS ACTION LEARNING FOR INNOVATION (BALI) METHODOLOGY TO SUPPORT ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN KYRGYZSTAN

Photo: WFP Kyrgyzstan/ 2021

CONTEXT

Located in a mountainous region of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan has a population of approximately 6.5 million. Nearly two thirds of the population live in rural areas and depend heavily on crop and livestock production. Over 60% of the rural population is poor or vulnerable to poverty. The rural economy is mostly dominated by low-income employment, limiting people's capacity to move out of poverty. There is a growing gender gap in labour force participation (from 16% in 1990 to 27.5% in 2019). Only 40% of rural women are economically active, as compared to 72% of rural men. Rural women spend 2.6 times more time on unpaid care and domestic work than rural men, which reduces their ability to participate in on- and off-farm employment opportunities.

INTERVENTION

The JP RWEE was implemented in the Batken, Chui, Naryn, Osh and Jalal-Abad provinces of Kyrgyzstan. A total of 4,547 women and 1,270 men participated in the programme. In 2018, the JP RWEE piloted the Business Action Learning for Innovation (BALI) methodology among 42 rural women's self-help groups (SHGs) and cooperatives (266 women and 15 men) in order to foster women's business innovation and develop sustainable livelihoods. BALI provides accessible and innovative tools for developing and managing enterprises, and builds on the participatory, empowering principles and tools of the Gender Action Learning System (GALS). BALI's premise is that family and group harmony facilitate success in sustainable entrepreneurship. In turn, a prosperous business contributes to the well-being of families. The SHG members involved in the BALI pilot were taken through a five-step process which included brainstorming on business innovation through a set of pictorial tools. The process enabled the groups to identify and develop innovative business ideas, assess the feasibility of their business innovation, including profitability, viability, and sustainability, and to analyse the role of the family and the self-help group in contributing to the business. These assessments were followed by group members carrying out a market analysis to identify and analyse challenges, opportunities, and cost-effectiveness. A one-year business plan was then developed for each planned enterprise. This set of tools enabled women self-help group members to think through, plan and develop new and non-conventional businesses whilst creating a conducive environment for achieving sustainable success.

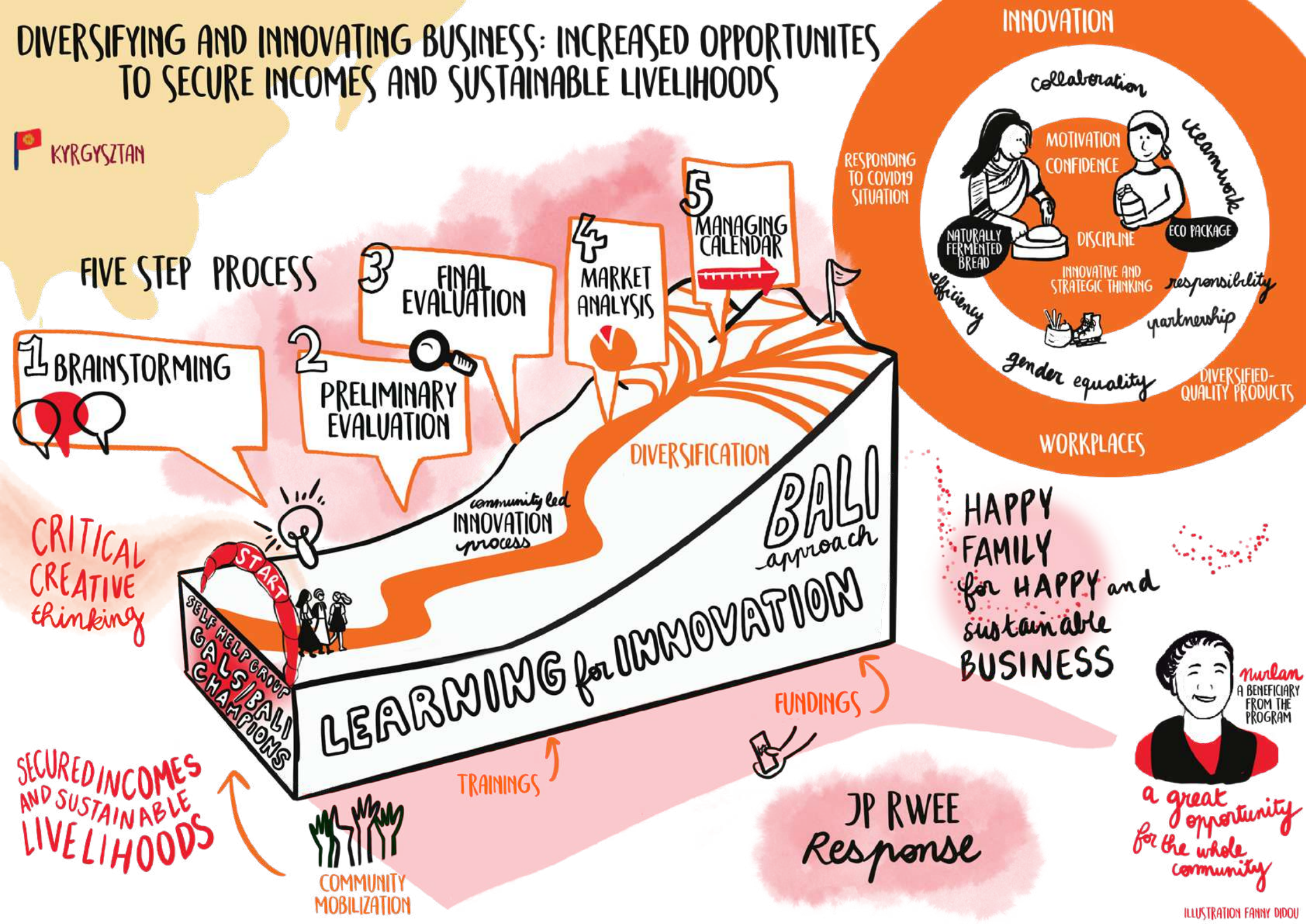
KEY RESULTS

The GALS/BALI qualitative study completed at the end of the pilot found that:

- BALI increased women's skills and knowledge and enabled them to develop new capacities in business and financial management as well as developing creative, innovative, and strategic entrepreneurial thinking. This led to increased profit but also better workload distribution among all household members.

DIVERSIFYING AND INNOVATING BUSINESS: INCREASED OPPORTUNITES TO SECURE INCOMES AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

KYRGYSZTAN



- As BALI builds on GALS tools, it also contributed to driving positive changes in gender equality. Results included more gender equitable workload in business activities, improved inclusive decision-making processes within families and groups, and helping group members to work efficiently.
- Women felt empowered by managing their businesses, not just through the increased income, but also because it strengthened their voice in the family, improved their role in decision making and also improved the way in which they were perceived by the community.

As a result of the BALI pilot, a total of 54 diverse and innovative business projects were developed by rural women. This included an eco-friendly paper packaging business, an ice-skating rink and a naturally fermented yeast free bakery which introduced a more nutrient-rich bread for local communities and increased income for the business by 189%.

KEY MESSAGE

Women's successful entrepreneurship can be developed through investing in social norm change and building on gender equitable household dynamics as a foundation for improving women's livelihoods, diversifying income and creating innovative and sustainable business models for rural women.

PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP FOR WOMEN'S FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN LIBERIA

CONTEXT

Liberia, a small country situated in West Africa, has a population of 5.2 million, 48% of whom live in rural areas and represent 68% of the country's poor. Rural women face multiple barriers to economic empowerment, including a lack of access to formal financial services. Only 28% of women have access to account ownership with a financial institution or mobile money service provider. Lack of access to banking means that women are often unable to access loans and their economic opportunities are restricted. Conversely, whilst banking remains inaccessible to many, there is a high mobile phone penetration rate of 83%.

INTERVENTION

The JP RWEE was implemented in six counties[1] in the south and east of Liberia, reaching 17,832 women and men (16,144 women and 1,688 men) and 94,509 household members. As part of the programme's strategy for addressing the barriers rural women face in accessing formal financial services, decent work and developing livelihoods opportunities, the programme established a private sector partnership with the telecommunications company Orange Liberia. The partnership with Orange Liberia created employment opportunities, characterised as decent work, for women as Orange Money Agents (mobile money agents) including support for infrastructure and ICTs through the provision of Orange Money kiosks and Orange mobile phones. Under the partnership, rural women were trained in the use of ICT platforms which enabled women market vendors to carry out financial transactions with their suppliers and to facilitate the purchase of goods and payment to vendors. Provision of the Orange Money kiosks enabled rural women to carry out customer transactions and support as mobile money agents. The women participating in the partnership were members of Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) established under the JP RWEE. VSLAs enable women lacking access to formal finance to have a means of saving money and accessing small loans to develop their livelihoods. Under the programme, women were also trained in business development and management, and financial literacy. A total of 70 women became Orange Money Agents in Montserrado, Margibi, and Grand Bassa counties, with over 30 women-managed Orange Money kiosks being set up by Orange Liberia across 30 local markets. Over 3,750 female market traders also took up mobile banking as an innovative approach to saving in the three counties, following basic training provided under the JP RWEE.

KEY RESULTS

The partnership between the JP RWEE and Orange Liberia contributed to rural women's empowerment in multiple ways. As evidenced by beneficiary testimonies and interviews, women had improved access to a mainstream finance system,

Photo: UN Women Liberia/ 2015

1 Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Bassa, Maryland, River Gee, and Sinoe Counties

as well as improved skills in digital financial literacy which supported their business development and entrepreneurship skills. Women who were Orange Money Agents had increased access to decent work and improved incomes and livelihoods, as well as a reduced burden of work. Women also had a safe and secure way of managing money, without having the insecurity of travelling to markets and carrying out transactions with physical cash, and the convenience offered by the mobile money mechanism saved women time that was previously spent travelling to carry out financial transactions. Women also reported that becoming Mobile Money Agents increased their economic autonomy and status in the household.

KEY MESSAGE

Harnessing mobile phone technology through the development of private sector partnerships can trigger multiple gains in advancing women's economic empowerment in rural areas. It can help to bring women into the wider financial ecosystem, increase women's market opportunities, thereby contributing to the development of women's livelihoods, and provide access to decent work. It also brings benefits in convenience, privacy and in increasing women's ownership of decision making relating to household finances. Mobile money and private sector partnerships represent a valuable tool in contributing towards rural women's economic empowerment.

PARTNERING FOR GENDER RESPONSIVE CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE IN ETHIOPIA

Photo: UN Women Ethiopia/ 2018

CONTEXT

Ethiopia is a vast, diverse, and predominantly rural country in East Africa of 115 million people, over 70% of whom work in agriculture. Women constitute 47% of the agriculture labour force and are estimated to produce 70% of household food production. However, they are 24% less productive in agriculture than men due to constraints including unequal access to agricultural inputs and labour saving technologies. In recent decades, the country has been increasingly affected by climate change, as evidenced by an increase in temperatures and decline in precipitation, which has resulted in increased drought and flooding. A national Climate Resilient and Green Economy Strategy (2011-2025) is in place, to which a National Action Plan for Gender Equality contributes.

INTERVENTION

The JP RWEE was implemented in the Afar and Oromia regions of Ethiopia and reached 4,700 rural women and 22,560 household members. Central to the programme approach was working with government supported Rural Savings and Credit Cooperatives (RUSACCOs) to develop women's livelihoods opportunities. Women cooperative members were supported through holistic knowledge transfer and capacity building on multiple topics. This included training in climate smart agriculture (CSA) production techniques and the use of climate smart technologies in order to build the resilience of women farmers to adapt to and mitigate against climate change. In Oromia region, a partnership was developed with Adami Tulu Agricultural Research Institute, local government (agriculture and land units), and private sector suppliers. The purpose of the partnership was to improve production and productivity through climate-smart agriculture techniques best suited to the local context. The local government provided land to the cooperative, and a demonstration centre was established by the Research Institute. A gender sensitive approach, ensuring a convenient community-based location, appropriate training tools, and flexible timing of training sessions, was taken in order to facilitate women's participation. Based on a needs assessment, the Research Institute then tailored its technical support to define the most appropriate CSA techniques and technologies for adoption by cooperatives in the area. For example, traditional beehives were modernised, taking into account the local climate, for improved honey production. Women planted 3,044 different fruit trees (banana, avocado, papaya, apple, guava, orange, and mango) for climate mitigation and increased production. Conservation agriculture techniques such as inter cropping, crop rotation and organic composting were demonstrated, alongside irrigation technologies. Local agricultural extension workers closely followed the technical guidance provided by the Research Institute and supported and monitored the cooperative members during their subsequent planting and harvesting. Local government also connected the women producers to buyers and sellers.

KEY RESULTS

The partnership enabled results at multiple levels. Women's knowledge and skills in the use of climate-smart agriculture practices and technologies were improved, along with their access to climate-smart information, services and technologies. Women were

observed to have greater confidence and assertiveness in approaching government extension services; productivity and income reportedly increased. At the local government level, the partnership with the research centre enhanced government expertise in climate-smart agriculture and improved their understanding of gender responsive extension services. The partnership also served to develop a model of good practice, with local government planning to replicate it in other areas.

KEY MESSAGE

Integrating gender-responsive approaches and building partnership to address the challenge of climate change enhances impact and effectiveness and advances women's economic empowerment. This public-private sector partnership enabled a community-based response to the mitigation of climate impacts which had benefits at the community, household and institutional levels. Such partnerships can contribute to establishing good practices for replication and scale up.

DEVELOPING GENDER RESPONSIVE RURAL AGRICULTURAL SERVICES: PILOTING FAO'S GRAST TOOL IN GUATEMALA

CONTEXT

In Guatemala, a country of 16.8 million inhabitants, 49% of the population live in rural areas, 76% of whom live in poverty. Among indigenous people, who comprise almost 40% of the total population, there is a poverty rate of approximately 80%. At the policy level, 83.3% of legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality under SDG 5 are in place. However, only 47.6% of indicators needed to monitor the SDGs from a gender perspective are available, with gaps in key areas including women's access to assets, including land. Rural women face multiple barriers to achieving economic empowerment, such as restricted access to productive assets, resources and services, including rural advisory services.

INTERVENTION

The JP RWEE was implemented in the area of Alta Verapaz in the north of Guatemala and reached 12,003 people (9,191 women and 2,812 men) and 57,614 household members, the majority of whom were indigenous Q'eqchi people. Improving the agricultural technical capacity of rural women, in particular those who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, is critical for enabling women to achieve their productive potential. Having access to gender responsive agricultural extension services is a core part of this capacity enhancement. Whilst a gender unit has been in place within the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) in Guatemala since 2008, its institutional visibility has traditionally been low and coordination with technical partners, alongside limited capacity and resources, has been weak. There has also been a lack of data for supporting decision making.

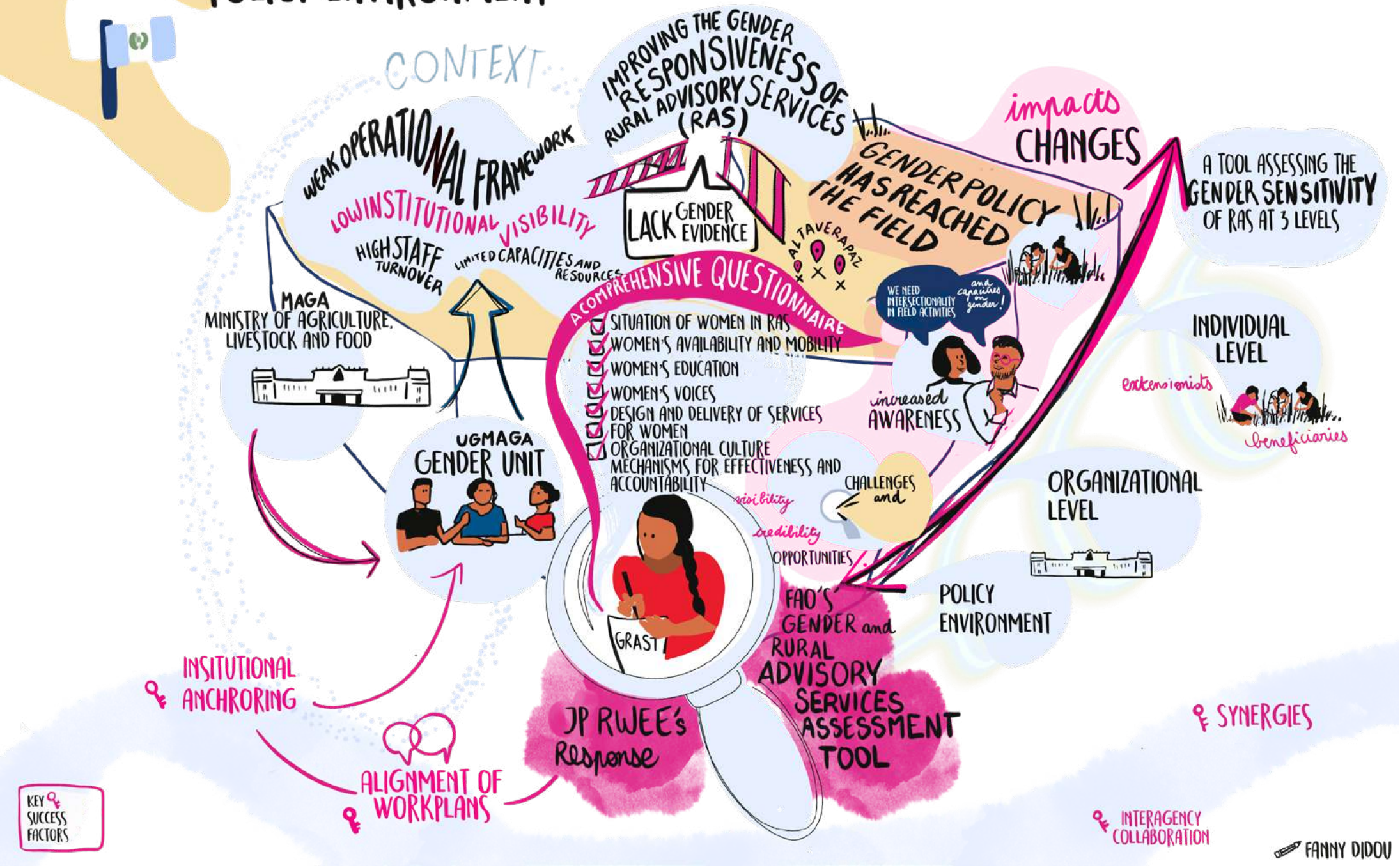
In order to contribute to the development of more gender responsive rural advisory services, the JP RWEE participated in the piloting of the Gender and Rural Advisory Services Assessment Tool (GRAST) in 2020-21. GRAST is a gender analysis tool developed by FAO in 2018. The tool was used to assess the gender responsiveness of policies and programmes within the MoA and to identify areas for improvement in terms of the design and delivery of services. Through use of the tool, the gender unit was able to identify areas for improvement and develop an action plan to address the identified gaps. Based on seven key thematic questions, the GRAST tool enabled a gender assessment of rural advisory services through participation at three levels: i. the policy level; ii. the organizational level and iii. the individual level (including interviews with agriculture extension workers and women and men farmers). The assessment findings were used to adapt rural advisory services to become more gender sensitive and to develop technical support and capacity building for national and local government. Areas assessed included women's access to rural advisory services, their constraints as regards education and literacy, and the extent of women's representation in agricultural development.

Photo: FAO Guatemala/ 2015

KEY RESULTS

The use of the GRAST tool has the potential to lay a solid foundation for a sustainable, inclusive and participatory reform of Rural Advisory Services (RAS). Its implementation by the Gender Unit of the Ministry of

TOWARDS A MORE GENDER RESPONSIVE POLICY ENVIRONMENT



Agriculture enabled the development of an operational strategy for inclusive, gender sensitive agricultural services. This also served to increase the visibility and understanding of the work of the Gender Unit within the Ministry, serving as a strong policy example for other Ministries with regards to the development of gender sensitive policies and strategies. The involvement of government field technicians in the GRAST process enabled them to understand the challenges that women face in accessing agricultural support services and in turn apply a gender-sensitive lens to their work. Understanding the underlying causes of gender inequality helps to ensure that technical services are more gender responsive, as well as recognising intersecting forms of discrimination faced by groups such as rural indigenous women. The use of the GRAST tool also enhanced the awareness of rural indigenous women as rights holders. Women were exposed to the concepts of women's rights and their rights to gender sensitive policies and were able to hold discussions with local government actors. The tool enabled challenges and opportunities to be identified and contributed to increasing the evidence base for gender sensitive rural advisory services.

KEY MESSAGE

The use of practical assessment tools is instrumental in enabling government policies and programmes to be tailored to the differing needs of men and women. Partnering together and delivering as One UN enables expertise to be leveraged and contributes to the development of an enabling environment for the economic empowerment of rural women.

JOINT PROGRAMME:
Accelerating Progress towards
Rural Women's Economic Empowerment

Joint Programme on
Accelerating Progress towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment

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