



## CASE STUDY, NIGER: A JOINT APPROACH

Photo: Dimitra clubs ensure women's voices are heard  
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Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
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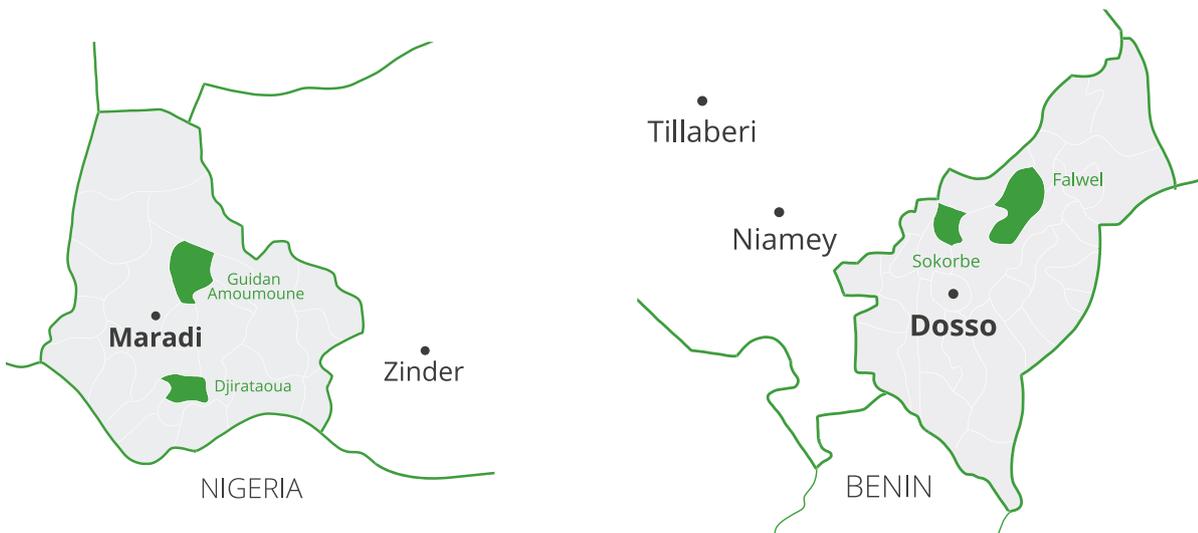


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## ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment programme (known officially as the ‘Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women; JP RWEE) is a global initiative that aims to secure livelihoods and rights for rural women. The programme is jointly implemented the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UN Women (UNW), and the World Food Programme (WFP) and is currently being implemented in seven countries: Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger, and Rwanda.

In Niger, the JP RWEE has been working in four villages in two of the most vulnerable areas of the country: Dosso and Maradi. The programme in Niger has been hugely successful, thanks in no small part to the ability of the four agencies to work in line with Niger’s national priorities, and work alongside the local communities. **Furthermore, the ability of the four implementing agencies to leverage their individual strengths and comparative advantages have strengthened the impact of the project activities and helped ensure the success of the JP RWEE in Niger.**



Maps of Niger with intervention areas highlighted

## WORKING ALONGSIDE NIGER'S NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK



Right from the start, the JP RWEE contributed to and aligned with Niger's National policy framework – in particular, with the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Ministry of Agriculture. The JP RWEE activities were written in sync with the country's national development strategy priorities for nutrition, women's economic empowerment, and the National 3N Policy (Les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens; 'Nigeriens feed Nigeriens'). Government services supported the selection of the regions where the activities are taking place which has further helped ensure that the programme is aligned with the Nigerian government priorities.

The collaboration between the UN agencies and the Nigerian national priorities helped ensure a commitment to the project at the regional level and establish a working relationship between regional services and the implementing agencies. This has helped raise the profile and reputation of the four agencies within the local community and alongside local partners.

Photo on the right: JP RWEE activities included training on animal welfare and breeding  
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Photo: ©JP RWEE, 2021



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# AGENCY COLLABORATION

The JP RWEE programme is successful because of the ability of each agency to leverage their strengths, bring their own expertise, and work together towards a common goal. Each agency in the JP RWEE contributes according to their expertise and their mandate: FAO provided seeds, IFAD supplied animal husbandry kits (for example, the expertise and training needed to breed the goats provided from the goat or ruminant kits), UNW contributed multifunction platforms (a diesel engine with various associated tools that can be used to complete household tasks like grinding grains, pumping water, or charging electric goods, among

others) and built up the support and strength of local farmer organizations, while WFP established demand for the agricultural outputs through the school feeding programmes. The shared expertise supported the intervention, but also allowed each organization to learn from one another – and, by extension, to use that knowledge elsewhere. For example, UNW gained valuable experience and knowledge in rural agriculture, while IFAD, FAO, and WFP benefitted from the strengthening of key gender concepts and policy making.

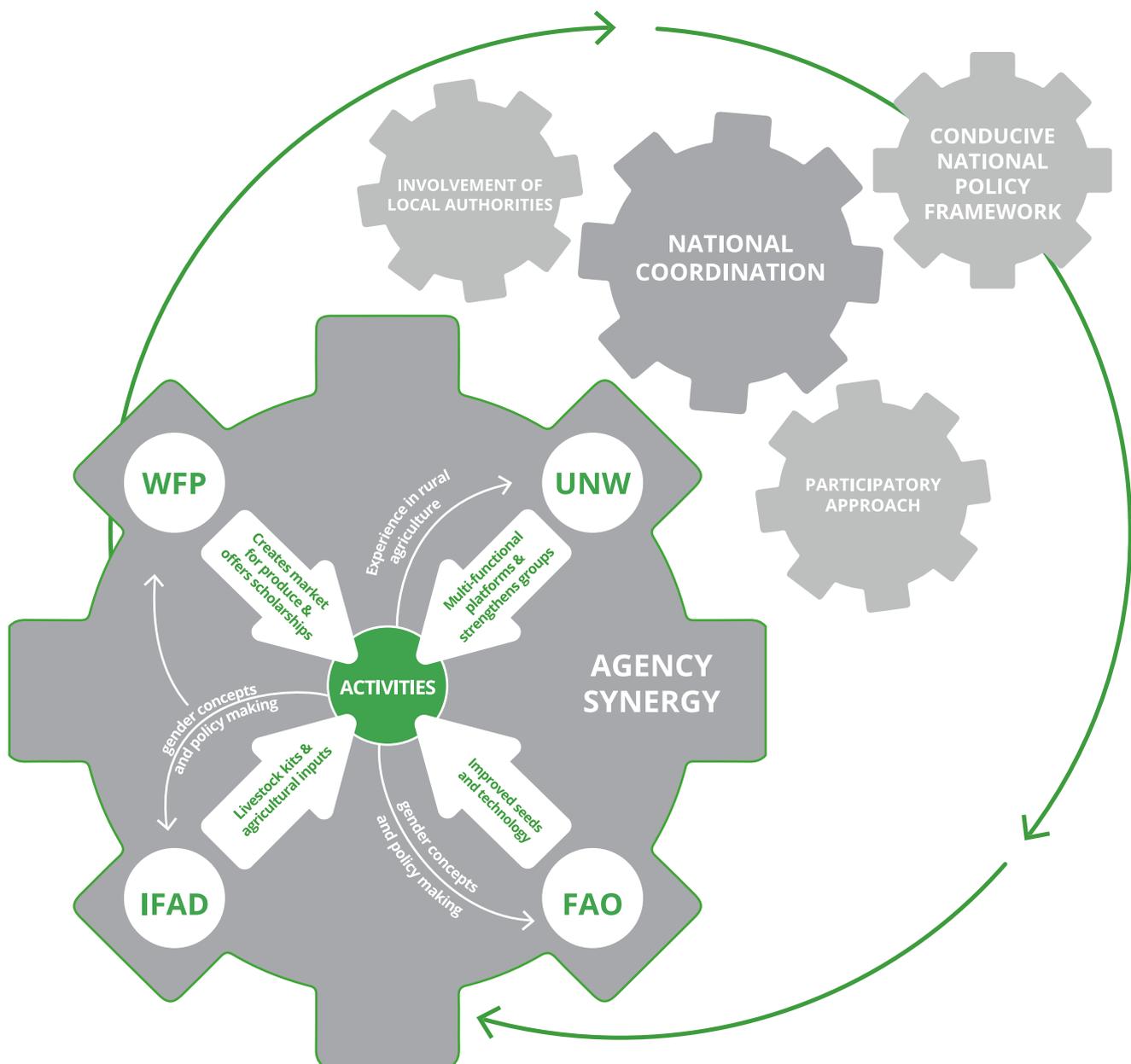


Diagram:  
Success was brought about by coherence of input at all levels.

## FROM THE GROUND UP

At the time that efforts were being made to ensure that the activities aligned with Nigerien government priorities and complemented the work of the participating UN bodies, the agencies consulted with people living in the very communities that the JP RWEE programme sought to serve. Dimitra clubs – group meetings developed by the FAO to promote reflection and dialogue – created a safe space where women, men, and young people could speak about the challenges they saw in their community. Gradually, the community members identified their most pressing needs, which were then brought to and discussed first with community groups, and then again with the local authorities.

Using the Dimitra clubs ensured that all levels of the community were involved in the planning and gave equal weight to all voices. Women-only Dimitra groups build a sense of community among the attendees, while general Dimitra groups increase awareness about the increasing social empowering of women in the JP RWEE programme. This contributed to the success of this programme in Niger.

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‘The Clubs have opened our eyes to ourselves and we have abandoned early marriage and the marriage of girls during schooling,’ says one attendee. ‘Today, in the classes of our village, there are more girls than boys.’

-JP RWEE joint monitoring informant, Dosso, 2020



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## COORDINATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

A programme of this scale required high-level coordination between the UN agencies, the Nigerien government, and the communities involved in the programme. This coordination was run by the National Coordinator, an independent position employed by the lead agency in Niger, but who worked exclusively for the JP RWEE programme. **As a representative for the entire programme, the National Coordinator could ensure that they didn't have competing priorities for their time from the different implementing agencies.**

The National Coordinator was responsible for coordinating the programme implementation

through the National Steering Committee (NSC; a group that included government ministries), and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC; made up of members from the four agencies and the service providers). These two committees were vital to ensuring the technical quality of the programme and its coherence with the different strategies. In addition to project management, report writing, and budget management responsibilities, the National Coordinator was tasked with ensuring that the NSC and the TAC were clearly and consistently communicating with each other. This helped ensure that the strategies continued to strengthen one another.

## COORDINATION BRINGS REAL RESULTS

Since its start in 2012, the Niger JP RWEE programme directly sought to feed into the Government of Niger's efforts to improve women's empowerment, and food and nutrition security. It managed to achieve just this, **directly reaching 25,609 people, and indirectly serving 16,000 others – the majority of whom were women.**

This programme was successful because of the **coordinated efforts on behalf of all parties to collaborate, leverage existing strengths, and work in the best interests of the communities being served.** By aligning directly within the Nigerien priorities and completing work that directly complemented the efforts of the participating agencies, the four implementing bodies were able to establish programmes that supported both these initiatives and rural communities. This in turn helped ensure buy-in from regional actors, while coordination with the communities on the ground ensured that the actions were appropriate, realistic, and based on need. Finally, **coordination between the FAO, IFAD, UNW, and WFP enabled resource and knowledge sharing that benefitted the entire programme.**

By combining technical training, education, government training, the building up of procurement and market systems, and supporting local authorities with gender-responsive planning and budgeting, this programme did just that. The most striking results are seen at the institutional and organizational level, but this has also led to tangible results on the ground. For example, ruminant kits (also referred to as goat kits, in which



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women are provided with goat, livestock feed, and training on how to milk, breed, and sell the goats) enabled women participating in the programme to reinvest the earnings they garnered directly back into their family's wellbeing.<sup>1</sup> Women were able to purchase more diverse food items (42%), pay for health services (15%), and provide schooling for their children, including for uniforms and supplies (8%).<sup>2</sup> They have also helped rural women improve their skills in goat rearing, milling, welding, and small mechanical repairs.

The multifunction platforms, meanwhile, helped lighten household tasks: 97% of women interviewed reported a lightening of their workload, while 69% declared having increased income, and 54% reported that they were more aware of the health status of their children, having more information and awareness of sound hygiene practices.

The multifunction platforms also helped produce products such as oils or flour, which adds value to products, diversifies diets, and helps bring in more family income. This has had an effect on nutrition and food security – something that is vitally important in a country where

around 20% of the population are food insecure.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, the process for the production of oils and flour created opportunities for women to become millers, something that was previously unheard of. Youth also get opportunities for new skills, which can help reduce migration.

At a community level, the revolving goat scheme – in which goats from the ruminant kits are shared in the community in order to allow other women to breed from them – increases incomes and opens up opportunities for decentralized agriculture and veterinary services, both of which will increase as livestock husbandry grows. These services are now more utilized and active than before, and more motivated to work with farmer groups. For their part, the structure of the farming groups has increased confidence, developed more savings, and provides access to cheaper credit and collective bargaining power for the purchase of essential items like seeds and farming equipment.

The school feeding programmes, meanwhile, have increased nutritional outcomes for children.

<sup>1</sup> FAO, IFAD, WFP & UN Women (2018) Niger Annual Report 2017

<sup>2</sup> FAO, IFAD, WFP & UN Women (2020) Niger Annual Report 2019

<sup>3</sup> WFP (2021) Niger Country Brief

## WHAT THE COMMUNITIES HAVE TO SAY

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“Before the project I was always between my home and my parents’ home because we always had arguments with my husband, but since then I learned to transform products and generate resources, no more hassle. We are in perfect harmony.”

– A female participant in the JP RWEE programme in Niger

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“I was a regular and even permanent migrant, but when I learned modern cultivation techniques with the farmer field school, I stopped the migration and stayed because I earn more than when I work elsewhere. In the same field, I am harvesting more than ten times the equivalent of my pre-project crops. Also, with the restoration of degraded land, I manage to cultivate land that my parents and grandparents were not able to develop for me.”

– A male participant in the JP RWEE programme in Niger

## THE POWER OF EMPOWERMENT

The economic empowerment of women in rural Niger has had a huge impact on women’s status within the community and individual households. The women supported through this programme are less dependent on their husbands, able to contribute to the household economy (both financially and in decision-making) and are reporting less tension in the home.

Significantly, data has also shown that communities involved in the JP RWEE showed a greater resilience to the impact of COVID restrictions. Through their participation in programme activities and the coordinated layering of the various intervention strategies between the four participating agencies, the resources acquired made it possible to meet the household food needs, even if there was little surplus to sell. Dimitra clubs established social networks and solidarity. Income generated with the various collective activities provided access to savings and credit, and cash was available without having to sell animals whose price had fallen. Additionally, an increase in cereals helped reduce the impact of the pandemic on household food supplies.

Photo:  
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The amount of income earned has not yet brought households out of poverty; however, there is an undeniable momentum that will carry these continued activities forward – and indeed, has already spread to other communities. Nearby villages have requested the goat kits, new participants have been inducted into the revolving goat schemes, and more women are involved in innovating and approaching their municipality for support. Most importantly, they are proud to be independent and want to be even more active – which, in turn, motivates field teams from delivery partners who can see the advantage of working together.

## SUSTAINABILITY

The stakeholders were confident that the programme’s behavioral changes will continue after cessation of support. There is evidence of transformation on the ground, clear social empowerment, and signs of economic empowerment. This includes the skills acquired to operate and maintain multifunctional platforms, knowledge, and resource sharing in relation to the goat kits. There is also a sense of collective assertion.

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



This case study has been produced by Mokoro Ltd as part of the Global End-term Evaluation of the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda from 2014 to 2020.

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