



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Audit of Gender-Responsive Practices in the Asia and Pacific Region



This document is comprised exclusively of the executive summary of the audit report.

Permanent Representatives accredited to FAO and institutional resource partners of FAO may be granted access to the full report upon written request to the Inspector General, in accordance with paragraphs 59-61 of the [Charter of the Office of the Inspector General](#).

AUD1125

02 December 2025

Office of the
Inspector General

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHAT WAS AUDITED?

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG), with the support of the Gender Team in the Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division (ESP), conducted an audit of FAO's gender-responsive practices in the Asia and Pacific region. The objective of the audit was to review compliance with FAO's Policy on Gender Equality 2020–2030 (hereafter referred to as the "FAO Gender Equality Policy") and to assess the effectiveness of related controls to mitigate the risks associated with inadequate gender mainstreaming. The audit assessed gender-related activities and controls as of June 2025.

WHY IT MATTERS?

For FAO to realize its *Four Betters* goals, it is crucial to achieve gender equality and empower women in agriculture, value chains and rural development. The FAO Gender Equality Policy provides a clear vision and a comprehensive framework of accountability for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in sustainable agriculture and rural development. It outlines a set of minimum standards to ensure that gender perspectives are effectively integrated into all institutional processes across offices and divisions. These standards are also aligned with the requirements of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

WHAT WERE THE KEY OBSERVATIONS?

The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has established a gender team responsible for providing support to Decentralized Offices in the region on gender-related matters and to comply with the FAO Gender Equality Policy. This support was appreciated by the majority of the gender focal points in the region. Noteworthy practices included development of a Regional Gender Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2025) and dissemination of gender-related newsletters to all offices in the region on a regular basis.

In terms of the minimum standards contained in the FAO Gender Equality Policy: (i) the mandatory gender training was completed by 94 percent of personnel in the region; and (ii) gender perspectives were adequately mainstreamed in the Country Programming Frameworks of the 13 Country Offices selected for review.

However, controls over compliance and monitoring of the FAO Gender Equality Policy and related gender mainstreaming processes required further improvement:

- Of the 35 Representations in the region, 24 had not completed the mandatory gender stocktaking exercise and action plan, and 14 were missing the mandatory Country Gender Assessment. This was in part due to insufficient knowledge of the FAO Gender Equality Policy and the lack of understanding and expertise concerning the gender focal points roles. Many of the offices which did not fully comply with the policy are small offices for which ESP allows some flexibility in applying the policy. The fact that the current policy does not distinguish by office type or size in terms of compliance with the minimum standards was highlighted as an issue in audit report AUD0125. Nevertheless, of the 15 fully fledged Representations in the region five had not conducted the gender stocktaking exercise and three were missing the Country Gender Assessment (Moderate risk).
- Project gender markers are assigned by Lead Technical Officers and, in some cases, reviewed for their accuracy by the regional gender team in the Asia and Pacific region, during the project formulation phase. However, the review of the regional gender team is limited to regional projects that qualified for quality assurance review by the Project and Programme Review Committee. This increases the risk that some markers are not accurately defined or not defined at all despite being a mandatory requirement (Moderate risk).

CONCLUSION

Relevant structures, policies and procedures are mostly in place and operating as intended. However, the audit identified two risks, rated as moderate. If not addressed, they may affect the achievement of certain governance, risk management or internal control objectives.

The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has developed a suitable action plan to address the issues raised, in consultation with the Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division, and OIG will follow up on its timely implementation.



Pablo Fonte
Officer in Charge, Office of the Inspector General
02 December 2025