



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# Audit of Gender-Responsive Practices at the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia



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](#).

AUD0125

05 February 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, conducted an audit of FAO's gender-responsive practices in the Europe and Central Asia 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 activities and related controls as of October 2024. The audit included a sample of ten FAO Representations (from a total of 16 FAO Representations in the region).

## WHY IT MATTERS?

Achieving gender equality and empowering women in agriculture, value chains and rural development is crucial for FAO to realize its Four Betters goals. The FAO Gender Equality Policy provides a clear vision and a unified framework of accountability for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. 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 Europe and Central Asia has established a gender team responsible for providing support to Decentralized Offices in the region and the FAO Gender Equality Policy is generally complied with. The audit identified the following improvements to enhance controls over compliance and monitoring of the FAO Gender Equality Policy and related gender mainstreaming processes:

- Information on the actual level of Decentralized Offices' compliance with the FAO Gender Equality Policy needs improvement as there were discrepancies in the records available. In addition, as of October 2024, only 83 percent of personnel in the region had completed the mandatory training course "Achieving Gender Equality in FAO's Work" (Moderate risk).
- Only two of the sampled countries in the region had completed a gender stocktaking exercise. The Country Gender Assessment was available in eight of the ten Decentralized Offices reviewed, but six assessments were more than five years old and were therefore likely to be outdated. A qualitative review of seven sampled Country Programming Frameworks indicated that two lacked sufficient attention to gender-related matters. Due to FAO's limited presence in many countries in the region, decentralized offices were unable to fully meet with minimum standards of the FAO Gender Equality Policy. While the FAO Gender Team had applied some flexibility in such cases to allow partial compliance, clear guidance on the policy's applicability to different types of decentralized offices is recommended to uphold accountability. (Moderate risk).
- An assessment of 11 sampled projects showed that three had been assigned incorrect gender markers (Moderate risk).

## CONCLUSION

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

The Gender Equality Division and the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia have developed a suitable action plan to address the issues raised, and OIG will follow up on its timely implementation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mika Tapio". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the top of the "M".

**Mika Tapio**  
Inspector General  
5 February 2025