



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture and food systems

A handbook
for gender focal points

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ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

This handbook is intended to support the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) gender focal points, at FAO headquarters and in the decentralized offices, in addressing gender issues in their work. It also serves as a valuable resource for all FAO employees who are interested in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, and to better understand the frameworks and institutional mechanisms that guide and sustain FAO's work on gender.

More specifically, the purpose of the handbook is to serve as a comprehensive and practical reference tool for gender focal points to support gender mainstreaming work within FAO, in line with the requirements set by the corporate Policy on Gender Equality and within the context of the Organization's mandate and strategic vision.

It equips gender focal points with basic conceptual information and tools to effectively fulfil their role and support their respective divisions and offices in complying with the requirements of the Policy on Gender Equality. The handbook could also be a useful tool for gender focal points to discuss their terms of references (ToRs) and Performance Evaluation and Management System (PEMS) objectives with managers and supervisors, who are ultimately responsible for the implementation of the gender-related work in their respective office and division, and thus for ensuring that gender focal points have sufficient capacities and resources to fulfil their roles.

The first part of the handbook on ***Gender equality, women's empowerment and FAO*** explains the relevance of gender equality and women's empowerment for achieving FAO's mandate. It discusses FAO's strategic framework, in which gender is addressed both as an objective and a cross-cutting theme. This part also outlines the main global frameworks that determine FAO's institutional commitments and modes of operation towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

The second part on ***FAO's gender architecture*** provides an overview of FAO's institutional implementing structure that coordinates and supports the work towards gender equality and women's empowerment, of which the gender focal points are an essential part.

The third part of the handbook on ***Main tasks and responsibilities of the gender focal points*** analyzes in detail the ToRs of the gender focal points, describing the expected tasks and responsibilities set out in the ToRs. This part also includes relevant tools and resources to support the gender focal points in the successful integration of gender equality in FAO's work, based on their role.

At the end of the handbook, the following annexes are included: Annex I contains the ToRs for gender focal points at FAO headquarters and in decentralized offices; Annex II presents a gender glossary covering the main gender concepts and approaches adopted by the Organization; Annex III includes a table of FAO's minimum standards for gender mainstreaming; and Annex IV includes a selection of key FAO publications related to gender.

By using this handbook, it is expected that the gender focal points will be better equipped to fulfil the requirements of the ToRs, and thus make a substantive contribution towards the Organization's efforts to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture and food systems.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CGA	Country Gender Assessment
CEB	UN Chief Executives Board
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
CPF	Country Programming Framework
DO	Decentralized office
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ESP	Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equity Division
GBV	Gender-based violence
GEEW	Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
GTG	Gender Theme Group
PEMS	Performance Evaluation Management System
PIRES	Programme Planning, Implementation Reporting and Evaluation Support System

RAF	Regional Office for Africa
RAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
REU	Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
RLC	Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
RNE	Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TOR	Terms of reference
UNCT	UN Country Team
UN SDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN-SWAP	UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNCT-SWAP SCORECARD	UN Country Team System-wide Action Plan Scorecard

PART 1

GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND FAO

This part explains the relevance of gender equality and women's empowerment for achieving FAO's mandate, and outlines the corporate and global frameworks that determine FAO's institutional commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.

1.1. Why are gender equality and women's empowerment relevant to FAO's mandate?

Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture, value chains and rural development is central to FAO's goal of eradicating hunger, malnutrition and poverty. This goal was reconfirmed by the [FAO Director-General's bulletin](#), issued on the 8th of March 2020, International Women's Day, which called for all managers and employees to address gender equality in their normative and technical work.

Globally, women comprise over 37 percent of the world's rural agricultural workforce, a ratio that rises to 48 percent for low-income countries (estimates based on International Labour Organization models for 2020). As such, women fulfil important roles in agri-food value chains as farmers, businesswomen, entrepreneurs and community leaders, ensuring food security and nutrition, at community and household levels.

Yet, the gender gap in agriculture remains extensive. As consumers, women are more likely than men to be food insecure in every region of the world; and as producers, rural women face even greater constraints than their male counterparts in accessing natural and productive resources and services, technologies, market information and financial assets.

Evidence shows that when rural women have the same access as men to productive resources, services and economic opportunities, there is a significant increase in agricultural output, with immediate and long-term social and economic gains, which contribute to the reduction of poor and hungry people in the world. Gender equality is therefore central to achieve FAO's mandate, and it is a basic human right.

Gender equality is also a fundamental condition for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In fact, gender equality is both a stand-alone goal in **SDG 5 on Gender Equality**, and it is integrated in each of the 17 goals, and included in several of the SDGs' targets and indicators. This means that only by also ensuring the rights of women and girls across all the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda commitment of leaving no one behind can be realized.

Within the context of SDG 5 on Gender Equality, FAO is the custodian agency for two indicators: **Indicator 5.a.1** [Women's ownership and rights over agricultural land and other forms of property and natural resources](#)¹; and **Indicator 5.a.2** [Women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control](#).²

¹ **Indicator 5.a.1** (a) Percentage of people with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land (out of total agricultural population), by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure.

² **Indicator 5.a.2** Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control.

FACT BOX 1

DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S BULLETIN: FAO'S ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

On the 8th of March 2020, International Women's Day, the FAO Director-General released a [DG bulletin](#) reconfirming FAO's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment as a key strategy to enhance the efficiency, relevance and impact of FAO's work. The DG bulletin outlines some of FAO's accountability and support mechanisms for gender equality, such as the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and the gender focal point network. The DG calls for all managers and employees to take the necessary steps to ensure the effective implementation of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality, and stepping up the Organization's efforts towards achieving gender parity in the workforce, at all levels, by 2024 and the promotion of a harmonious work environment free from all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse. Managers are requested to ensure that concrete results are achieved, sustained and reported on, by all departments, divisions, regional and country offices.

1.2. Guiding frameworks to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment

This section outlines the main guiding frameworks that determine FAO's institutional commitments and approaches towards gender equality, including the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and the United Nation's System Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP 2.0) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW). It also introduces key global frameworks of relevance for FAO's work that have been instrumental in shaping the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide.

1.2.1. Gender as a cross-cutting theme in FAO's strategic framework

Gender equality is addressed in FAO's strategic framework³ as a cross-cutting theme.⁴ This implies that gender equality is fundamental for the achievement of FAO's strategic objectives (SOs),⁵ both at output and outcome levels, and that gender issues should be systematically integrated in planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting.

While the technical gender-related work is embedded in the five SOs, the mainstreaming functions of the cross-cutting theme on gender (e.g. coordination, capacity development and advocacy) are located under a specific outcome in Objective 6 (Outcome 6.3). This work is monitored through two specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs),⁶ which are based on the Organization's two main gender accountability frameworks: the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and the UN-SWAP 2.0.

The gender work under Outcome 6.3 is coordinated, monitored and reported on by the Gender team in the Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equity Division (ESP).⁷

³ An overview of FAO's strategic framework is available in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).

⁴ The cross-cutting themes include: gender, governance, climate change, nutrition and statistics.

⁵ FAO's strategic objectives: SO1: The eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; SO2: More productive and sustainable agriculture; SO3: Reduction of rural poverty; SO4: Enabling more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems; and SO5: Increasing the resilience of livelihoods to disasters.

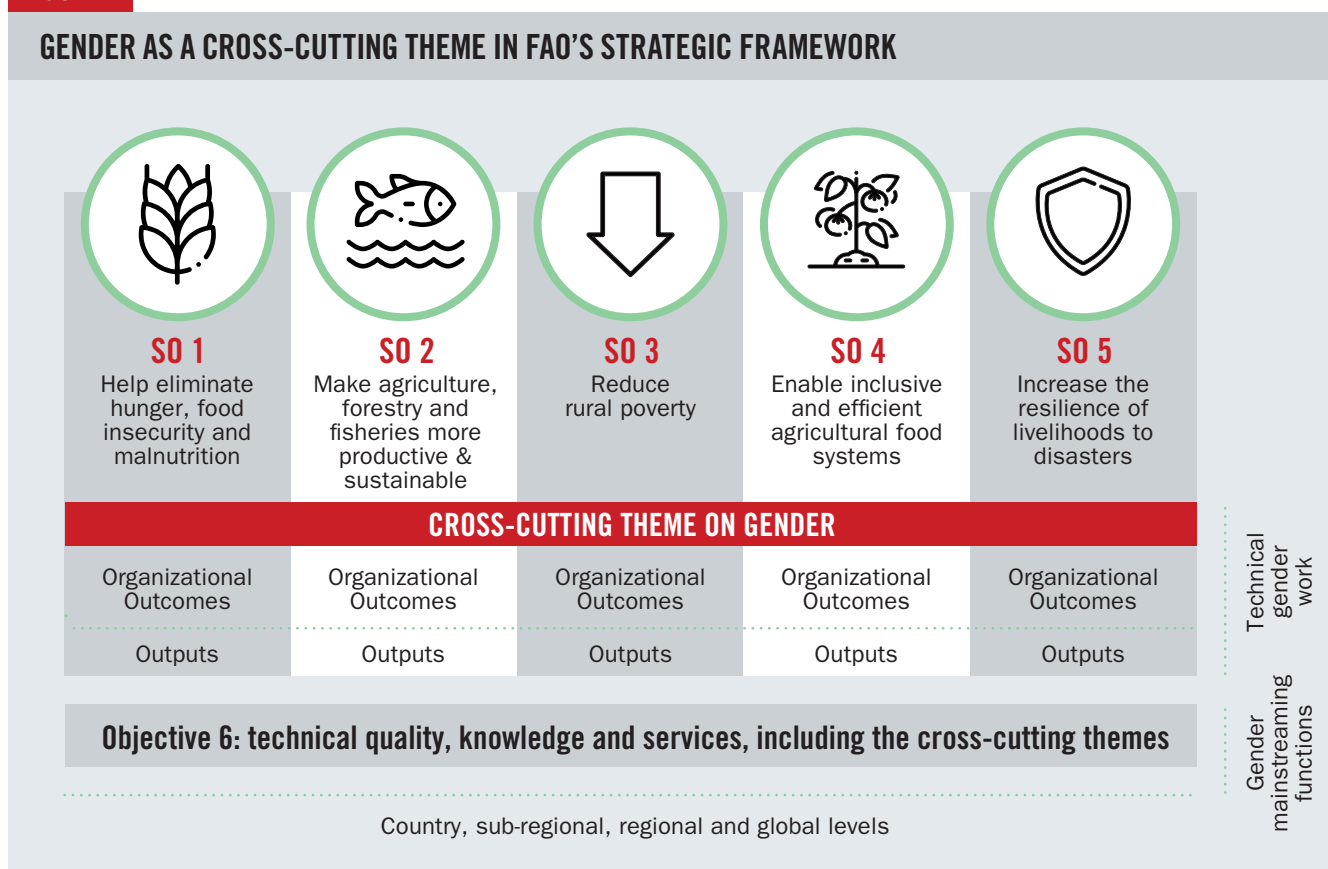
⁶ Key Performance Indicators:

6.3.A Number of gender mainstreaming standards implemented (related to the minimum standards of the Gender Equality Policy).

6.3.B Number of UN-SWAP 2.0 performance standards met or exceeded.

⁷ See section 2.1 for an overview of FAO's gender architecture.

FIGURE 1



1.2.2. FAO Policy on Gender Equality and its minimum standards

The FAO Policy on Gender Equality, first endorsed in 2012 and updated in 2020, provides the Organization with a corporate framework to orient its technical and normative work towards gender equality objectives, relevant to FAO's mandate.⁸

The Policy includes a set of minimum standards for gender mainstreaming to ensure that gender dimensions are adequately addressed in all organizational functions, from results-based management to staff learning and evidence generation.

Recognizing that all employees have a role to play in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, the Policy establishes a shared accountability framework, which outlines the responsibilities for its implementation across the Organization. Senior managers, in particular, are expected to ensure that employees under their supervision have sufficient capacities and resources to address gender equality dimensions in their respective areas of work.

The goal of the Policy is: *"Achieving equality between women and men in sustainable agriculture and rural development for the elimination of hunger and poverty."*⁹

⁸ The FAO Policy on Gender Equality was updated in 2020 to ensure alignment with the SDGs and the UN System-wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP 2.0).

⁹ FAO is not accountable on its own to fulfil this overall goal; it is part of a system of UN agencies, governments, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), private sector partners, etc. that must work together towards the achievement of the gender equality objectives.

In order to achieve this goal, it spells out four major objectives, which highlight the key dimensions to be addressed for promoting gender equality in agriculture, rural development and natural resource management:

- Women and men have equal voice and decision-making power in rural institutions and organizations to shape relevant legal frameworks, policies and programmes.
- Women and men have equal rights, access to and control over natural and productive resources, to contribute to and benefit from sustainable agriculture and rural development.
- Women and men have equal rights and access to services, markets and decent work and equal control over the resulting income and benefits.
- Women's work burden is reduced by enhancing their access to technologies, practices and infrastructure and by promoting an equitable distribution of responsibilities, including at the household level.

To achieve its gender equality objectives, FAO has adopted a twin-tracked strategy:

1) Gender mainstreaming: FAO will ensure that its normative and technical work systematically integrates a gender perspective and responds to the different needs, interests and capacities of women and men.¹⁰

2) Targeted interventions: When the gender gap is particularly wide, FAO will implement programmes and projects that specifically target women and/or focus on the promotion of gender equality as their main objective.

In all cases, FAO will adopt integrated and gender-transformative approaches that take into consideration the different needs of women and men and also actively seek to redress unequal power dynamics by challenging the discriminatory social norms, behaviors and attitudes that are at the root of persisting gender inequalities.

FAO's minimum standards for gender mainstreaming

As mentioned above, the minimum standards¹¹ aim to ensure that gender dimensions are adequately integrated in institutional processes and functions by setting specific requirements for accountable offices and divisions. An example of an institutional process, which is key for gender mainstreaming, is the project cycle. It requires the integration of gender issues at the formulation stage (such as the assignment of gender markers) and evaluates gender integration at project completion (every project reports on gender as part of the terminal report).

The implementation of the minimum standards, which are aligned to the Performance Indicators of the UN-SWAP 2.0, falls under the direct responsibility of divisional directors and FAO Representatives, with the support of the gender focal points.

The minimum standards provide a clear set of gender requirements that are directly linked to some of the expected tasks and functions of the gender focal points. For example, the minimum standard 6 requires that a gender stocktaking exercise is carried out, and the minimum standard 7 requires that a Country Gender Assessment is conducted (expected to be initiated by the gender focal points in country offices).

The implementation of the minimum standards is monitored annually and progress achieved is reported to Members as part of the corporate reporting efforts under Outcome 6.3 (through the two KPIs).

¹⁰ The Organization will also consider other social dimensions that intersect with gender (age, marital status, disability status, religion, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.) and that can create and reinforce inequalities, not only between women and men but also among women and among men.

¹¹ See Annex III for a table of the minimum standards.

1.2.3. The UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

In 2012, the UN Chief Executives Board (CEB) adopted the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP)¹² on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEEW), which for the first time in UN history enabled gender issues to be mainstreamed systematically and measurably into all major institutional functions of UN system entities.

In 2018, the second generation of the UN-SWAP was launched. The UN-SWAP 2.0 builds on lessons learned from the previous UN-SWAP and it is closely aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

All UN entities are mandated to implement the UN-SWAP 2.0 and report on the entity's progress. The reporting exercise is coordinated by UN Women, and results are included in the annual report (*Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*) of the Secretary-General to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

As illustrated in figure 2, the UN-SWAP 2.0 identifies **17 Performance Indicators** (PIs) that UN entities are requested to meet in order to mainstream gender effectively. Indicator 11 on Gender Architecture is directly linked to the functions of the gender focal points, and requires that entities appoint gender focal points at all levels in the Organization (FAO headquarters, regional and country levels), with well-defined terms of references and can allocate at least 20 percent of their time to gender-related work.

FAO is committed to meet all performance indicators of the UN-SWAP 2.0 and reports on its progress on an annual basis. The ESP Gender Team coordinates the reporting exercise in close collaboration with gender focal points in concerned FAO headquarters divisions.¹³ However, as a main guiding framework for FAO's gender work, all gender focal points must be well versed with the UN-SWAP 2.0 and support necessary actions if required.

Although FAO has performed well across all the UN-SWAP 2.0 performance indicators, particularly on the internal gender architecture, the Organization still faces challenges in achieving some requirements, such as reaching gender parity among its staff, particularly at the senior level. The Human Resources Division (CSH)¹⁴ is responsible for the implementation of the gender parity targets. As a response to meet the gender parity targets of the UN-SWAP 2.0, an [Action Plan for the achievement of gender parity of FAO staff](#) was developed in 2018 and updated in 2019.

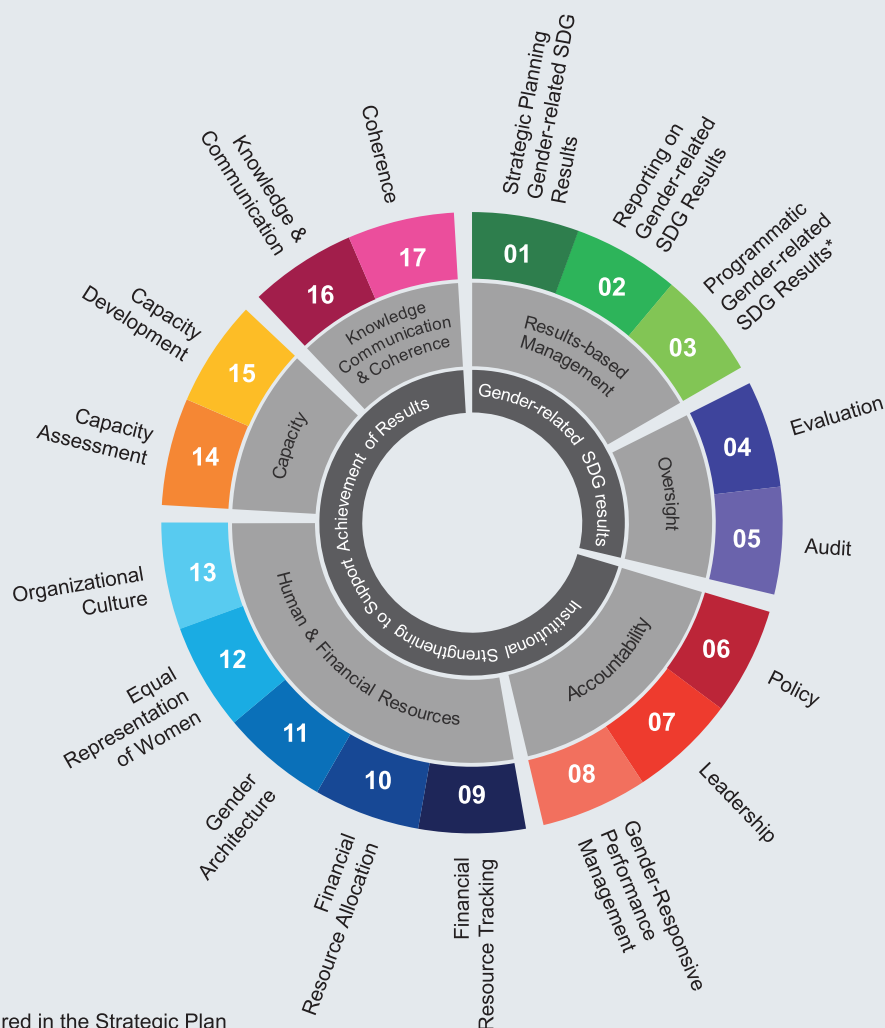
¹² The UN-SWAP was established to implement the 2006 UN System-wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: focusing on results and impact.

¹³ FAO headquarters divisions mandated to report annually against the UN-SWAP 2.0: Governing Bodies Servicing Division (CSG), Ethics Office (ETH), Office of Communications (OCC), Human Resources Division (CSH), Office of Evaluation (OED), Office of the Inspector-General (OIG) and Office of Strategy, Planning and Resources Management (OSP).

¹⁴ CSH is also responsible for the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace and FAO has had a robust policy in place since 2015: [Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority](#).

FIGURE 2

UN-SWAP 2.0 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



The UN Country Team System-wide Action Plan Scorecard

The UN-SWAP framework also sets out a plan to promote gender equality and women's empowerment at country level and within the UN Country Teams (UNCTs).¹⁵

The UNCT System-wide Action Plan Scorecard (UNCT-SWAP Scorecard), first introduced in 2008, is an accountability framework that promotes improved planning, coordination, programming and results for GEEW at country level, tied to support Member States in achieving the SDGs. The Scorecard supports UNCTs in self-assessing and reporting on their standing with respect to a set of Performance Indicators drawn from inter-governmental mandates, and based on review and analysis of UNCT processes.

¹⁵ This is part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

The second generation of the Scorecard was rolled out in 2016-2018.¹⁶ As illustrated in figure 3, it is organized around seven dimensions that address key GEEW components: planning; programming and monitoring and evaluation; partnerships; communications and advocacy; leadership and organizational culture; gender architecture and capacities; resources; and results. Each dimension includes Performance Indicators, which UNCTs need to meet or exceed. At country level, the UNCTs Gender Theme Group (GTG) usually leads and coordinates the reporting exercise.

The Scorecard exercise is expected to become mandatory for all UNCTs, and for this reason it is important that the gender focal points in decentralized offices are familiar with the process and can support necessary actions if required. The Regional Gender Officers and the ESP Gender Team at headquarters are available to provide further guidance and support engagement of FAO country offices in the UNCT Scorecard reporting exercise.

FIGURE 3

UNCT-SWAP SCORECARD PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



For more information about the UN-SWAP 2.0 and the UNCT-SWAP Scorecard, [visit this page](#).

¹⁶ The updated Scorecard has been aligned with the UN-SWAP 2.0 to ensure a coherent accountability framework at country, regional and FAO headquarters levels.

1.2.4. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is a legally binding human rights instrument adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, and it is often referred to as an international bill of rights for women.

It consists of [30 articles](#) related to sex-based discrimination and spells out the meaning of gender equality and how this can be achieved. Although all 30 articles require attention, of particular interest to FAO's work is [Article 14](#), which addresses the specific challenges faced by rural women.

By ratifying it, State parties agree to implement the Convention's provisions in their national legal and policy frameworks, and to report regularly to the [CEDAW Committee](#) on the progress made and measures taken to implement CEDAW at country level.

Based on these reports, the CEDAW Committee formulates [general recommendations](#) addressing the reporting country (the so-called concluding observations), which highlight existing gaps and identify the actions required to address issues related to women's human rights. The concluding observations are issued by the CEDAW Committee to the State Parties at the end of their reporting cycle.

The [General Recommendation 34](#) on the rights of rural women is directly linked to FAO's mandate and obligates states to recognize, protect and promote the rights of rural women. It provides suggestions for practical policy and programmatic measures that can enhance women's rights in food security and agriculture.

FAO supports Member Nations in two main ways:

1. FAO provides technical advice on the elaboration of the regular reporting exercise on the implementation of the Convention carried out by Member Nations, as well as UNCTs.

Within this step of the CEDAW process, the gender focal points in country offices can play an important role, as the findings of the Country Gender Assessments¹⁷ provide relevant information on rural women's situation for the UNCTs, as well as the country's CEDAW reporting.

2. FAO provides technical support with the implementation of the concluding observations issued by the CEDAW committee, at the end of the country's reporting cycle.

For example, in Guatemala, FAO supported the formulation of the national Policy for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (2014-2023), which was ratified in 2015, and addresses the CEDAW Committee's latest concluding observations to the Government of Guatemala.

For further reference, see: [CEDAW: A tool for gender-sensitive agriculture and rural development policy and programme formulation. Guidelines for Ministries of Agriculture and FAO](#).

¹⁷ Minimum standard 7 of FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020-2030: "Country offices periodically carry out a Country Gender Assessment to provide national/international partners with an updated profile on gender and agriculture and inform country planning."

1.2.5. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

In 1995, [the Fourth World Conference on Women](#)¹⁸ adopted [the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action \(BPfA\)](#). As a defining framework for change, it remains the most progressive blueprint of the advancement on gender equality and women's empowerment. The Beijing Declaration upholds CEDAW and sets strategic objectives and actions in [12 critical areas of concern](#),¹⁹ which are all relevant to FAO's mandate.

The Fourth World Conference on Women was also instrumental in establishing gender mainstreaming as the global strategy to advance on gender equality and women's empowerment. As opposed to previous approaches such as Women in Development (WID),²⁰ gender mainstreaming takes both women's and men's interests and concerns into account.

The Beijing Declaration envisages legislative and administrative reforms to ensure gender equality in access to natural resources, including inheritance and ownership rights. It also calls upon governments to “ensure access to free or low-cost legal services, including legal literacy, especially designed to reach women living in poverty.”

To sustain the momentum of the Beijing Declaration, regular five-year reviews of progress are being conducted, and since 1996, [the Commission on the Status on Women](#) (CSW)²¹ has been mandated to take the lead in monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration.

Beijing +25

The year 2020 marked the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing +25), and the global community took stock on progress made towards women's rights since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995.

In 2019, regional review processes took place to assess current challenges that affect the implementation of the BPfA and its contribution towards the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. FAO contributed to the review process by completing a questionnaire on the achievements made by the Organization towards gender equality and women's empowerment over the past five years. The questionnaire fed into UN Women's UN-wide assessment report, *The Beijing +25 Synthesis Report*, which was also peer reviewed by FAO.

In March 2020, as the main outcome of the 64th session of the Commission of the Status of Women, the [Political declaration on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women](#) was adopted by Member States. In the Declaration, Member States welcome the progress made towards the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the BPfA, but express concern that overall progress has not been fast or deep enough. In some areas, progress has been uneven, and structural barriers, discriminatory practices and the feminization of poverty persist.

The Declaration also reaffirms the political will for action; recognizes that new challenges have emerged that require concerted and intensified efforts; and reaffirms that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls are crucial to progress across all the Sustainable Development Goals.

¹⁸ The UN has organized four world conferences on women: Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995.

¹⁹ Women and poverty; Education and training of women; Women and health; Violence against women; Women and armed conflict; Women and the economy; Women in power and decision-making; Institutional mechanism for the advancement of women; Human rights of women; Women and the media; Women and the environment; and The girl-child.

²⁰ Women in Development approaches almost exclusively focused on women-specific actions.

²¹ The CSW, established in 1946, is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

PART 2

FAO'S GENDER ARCHITECTURE

This part provides an overview of FAO's institutional structure that coordinates and supports the Organization's work towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

2.1. FAO's gender architecture

FAO has put in place a solid gender architecture to ensure consistent and coherent delivery of gender work across the Organization, while responding to the needs of Members and development partners and meeting the requirements of the Policy on Gender Equality and the UN-SWAP 2.0.

FAO's gender architecture includes the Gender Team in the Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equity Division; the Regional Gender Officers based in FAO's Regional Offices; and the gender focal points in FAO headquarters divisions and in the decentralized offices (subregional and country offices).

As *per figure 4*, there are clear links among all levels of the architecture: the coordination at regional level is the responsibility of the Regional Gender Officers, the gender focal points at FAO headquarters and decentralized offices support the implementation of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality, and the ESP Gender Team is responsible for the overall coordination of the gender mainstreaming functions under Objective 6 in FAO's strategic framework.

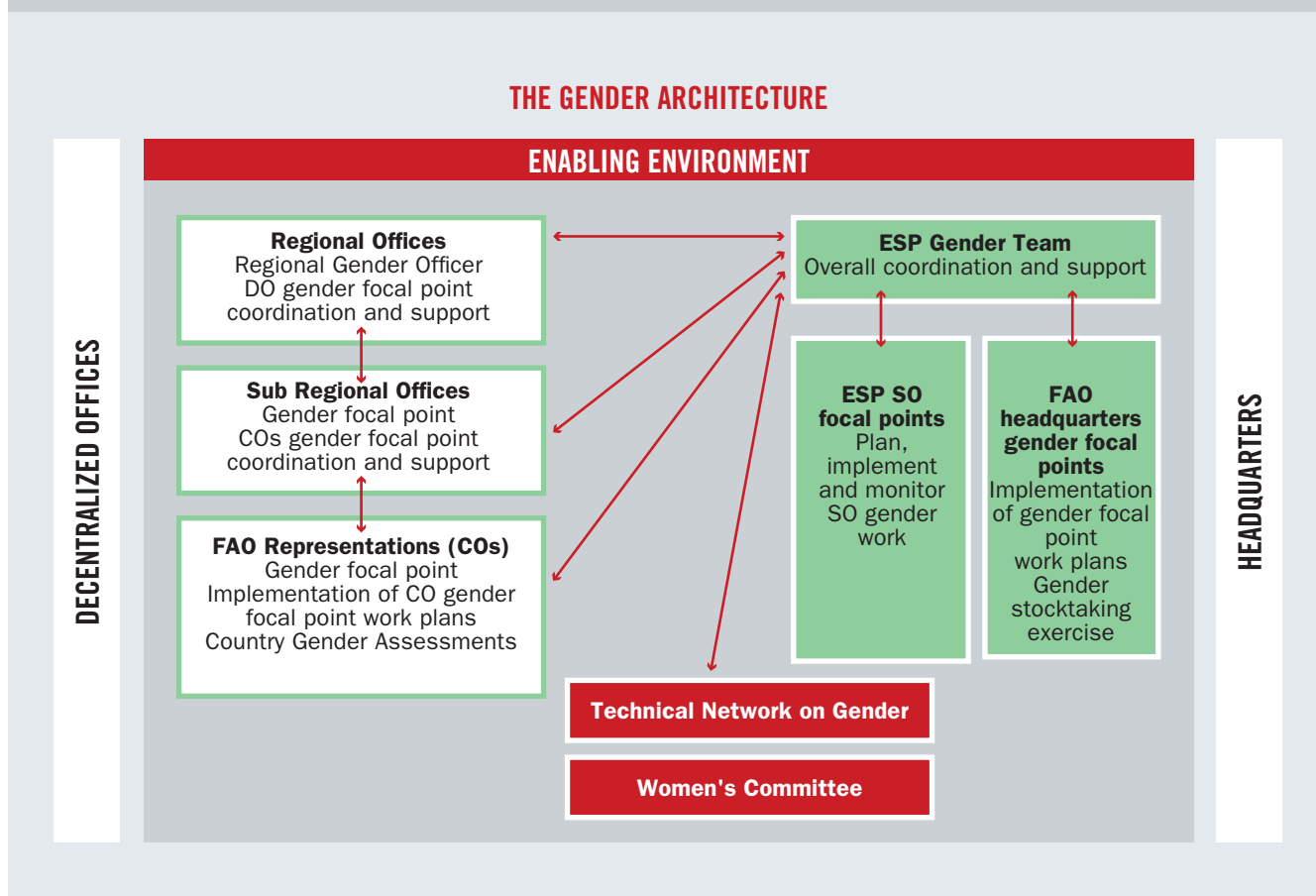
Among its functions, the ESP Gender Team:

- Leads and oversees the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and the UN-SWAP 2.0.
- Strengthens the capacity of FAO staff and increases awareness on gender issues.
- Coordinates and supports the gender focal point network.
- Coordinates the FAO Technical Network on Gender.
- Provides strategic guidance on the delivery of gender-related work.
- Provides policy support and technical assistance to Members.
- Generates and disseminates evidence and knowledge on gender and agriculture.
- Participates in the UN coordination mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment including the Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE).²²

²² IANWGE is a network of gender focal points in United Nations offices, specialized agencies, funds and programmes and is chaired by UN Women. [UN Women](#) also serves as the Secretariat for the network.

FIGURE 4

FAO'S GENDER ARCHITECTURE



FACT BOX 2

WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

The FAO Women's Committee was launched by the FAO Director-General on the 15th of October 2019, the International Day of Rural Women, to further the Organization's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. The objective is to act as a steering committee to promote and protect the political, economic, cultural and biological rights of women, as well as empower women and achieve gender parity in FAO. At the same time, the Women's Committee will act as a platform to support the Director General's engagement in high-level dialogue with FAO Member Countries (e.g. through the informal dialogue with the gender network of Permanent Representatives) and the UN System (e.g. the Chief Executives Board) on gender equality and women's empowerment. The Committee represents a mix of professional competences, age groups and nationalities from FAO headquarters, regional, liaison and country offices, and is chaired by Ms. Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General. The broad representation of Vice-Chairs and friends of the Committee will also chair on a voluntary basis.

2.1.1. FAO's gender focal point network

As part of the institutional gender architecture, the gender focal point network plays a key role in supporting the delivery of gender-related work. While all FAO employees are responsible for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in their work, the gender focal point network is a fundamental resource for raising gender awareness, lobbying, backstopping and supporting the Organization in implementing its Policy on Gender Equality and meeting the requirements of the UN-SWAP 2.0.

The global gender focal point network consists of more than 200 gender focal points based at FAO headquarters and in the decentralized offices. The ESP Gender Team supports the gender focal point network by creating tools and guidelines, and by facilitating networking between the gender focal points at FAO headquarters, and in FAO's five Regional Offices.²³

2.1.2. The gender focal points

A gender focal point is a staff member (preferably P4 or above) in a division or office at headquarters or decentralized office. The role of the gender focal point is to act as a resource person for gender mainstreaming and serve as a catalyst for gender issues in his/her respective division/office.

The requirements for the gender focal points as defined in the ToRs are:

- Be a senior staff member (preferably P4 or above).
- Be able to dedicate 20 percent of their time to gender-related work and insert a dedicated objective and performance indicator in the Performance Evaluation and Management System (PEMS).²⁴
- Become familiar with the FAO Policy on Gender Equality, its implementation and monitoring framework.
- Be expected to develop their gender-related competence further, through available online gender courses, trainings and support from the Regional Gender Officers and the ESP Gender Team.
- Take the mandatory e-learning course for gender focal points on [Gender in Food and Nutrition Security](#) and the corporate mandatory e-learning on gender equality: [Achieving Gender Equality in FAO's Work](#).

The gender focal points are selected for a period of at least two (2) years, and appointed by their division's/office's management, who are ultimately accountable for the implementation of the ToRs. Divisions, offices and decentralized offices are encouraged to select one gender focal point and nominate an alternate gender focal point.

The alternate supports the gender focal point either as a substitute when the gender focal point is absent, by attending meetings and performing other gender focal point functions, and/or as a collaborator/support person, who assists the gender focal point in his/her function by proactively contributing to the formulation and implementation of the gender focal point's annual work plan.²⁵

²³ The Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa (RNE); for Asia and the Pacific (RAP); for Europe and Central Asia (REU); for Africa (RAF); and for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC).

²⁴ Requirement of the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP 2.0).

²⁵ All gender focal points are expected to develop an annual gender focal point work plan reflecting the requirements of the ToRs.

To support the gender focal points in carrying out their tasks, all gender focal points at FAO headquarters have a **counterpart from the ESP Gender Team**. For gender focal points in decentralized offices, **the Regional Gender Officers** are the main counterparts, backstopped by appointed members from the ESP Gender Team, whose technical support is also extended to gender focal points in decentralized offices. The counterpart assists, motivates and provides technical support and guidance to the gender focal points in their roles. They also facilitate dialogue between the gender focal points and the wider gender focal point network; provide capacity development support; and monitor and report progress made towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

2.1.3. The Technical Network on Gender

All gender focal points at FAO headquarters and in the decentralized offices are also part of the Technical Network on Gender (TNG). While the gender focal point network represents gender focal points in divisions and offices with specific ToRs, the TNG is a broader network and is part of a corporate initiative of Technical Networks (TNs) in FAO (including Statistics; Food Value Chain Development; Indigenous People; and Climate Change).

The TNs are voluntary communities of professionals sharing the same discipline or disciplinary interests. The objective of the TNs is to enhance disciplinary competences through knowledge sharing, discussions and other outreach activities inside and outside of FAO. Each TN has its own way of engaging members, including newsletters, technical publications or webinars. The TNG produces a monthly newsletter known as the FAO Gender News, facilitates information flow and sharing of technical resources, and organizes technical seminars and webinars.

PART 3

MAIN TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GENDER FOCAL POINTS

This part outlines the main tasks and responsibilities of the gender focal points, as outlined in the ToRs. It also includes relevant tools and resources to support the successful integration of gender equality into FAO's work.

3.1. Oversight and planning

All gender focal points are expected to oversee the gender-related work in the country/subregional office and division/office. The specific tasks of a gender focal point, as stated in the Policy on Gender Equality, are to:

- Develop an **individual work plan** and include a gender objective in **the Performance Evaluation Management System (PEMS)**.
- Conduct a **gender stocktaking exercise**.²⁶
- Develop a divisional/office/**Gender Action Plan** based on the findings from the gender stocktaking exercise.
- Conduct a **Country Gender Assessment**. This is a requirement for decentralized offices only.

3.1.1. Annual gender focal point work plan

Gender focal points are required to develop an **annual gender focal point work plan**, reflecting the duties and responsibilities set out in the gender focal point terms of reference. The work plan should be developed in collaboration with the counterpart (ESP Gender Team member for FAO headquarters gender focal points and the Regional Gender Officer for gender focal points in decentralized offices), and agreed with the Divisional Director/FAOR, who is ultimately accountable for the implementation of the ToRs.

The work plan should be shared with the ESP counterpart or with the Regional Gender Officer, with gender@fao.org in copy.

Gender focal points are advised to use the work plan template available on [the Gender Online Platform](#), where the gender focal point annual work plans are uploaded and accessible to all members of the gender focal point network.

Gender focal points are also required to **insert a dedicated gender objective and/or performance indicator in the Performance Evaluation Management System (PEMS)** to reflect the 20 percent of time they are expected to devote to gender-related work. The percentage of gender focal points that integrate gender in their PEMS is annually monitored by the Human Resources Division (CSH) as part of the reporting against the minimum standards of the Policy on Gender Equality.

²⁶ For gender focal points at FAO headquarters service divisions, it may not be applicable to conduct a gender stocktaking exercise. Gender focal points in these divisions are encouraged to consult their ESP counterpart for advice.

3.1.2. The gender stocktaking exercise

The gender stocktaking exercise is a periodic review of the ongoing and past gender work of the division/office. It serves to assess how well gender equality has been reflected/incorporated in the work of the division/office and highlights gaps, good practices and opportunities for action to better mainstream gender in the work of the division/office.

The stocktaking should be repeated every four years, and it responds to minimum standard 6 of the Policy on Gender Equality.

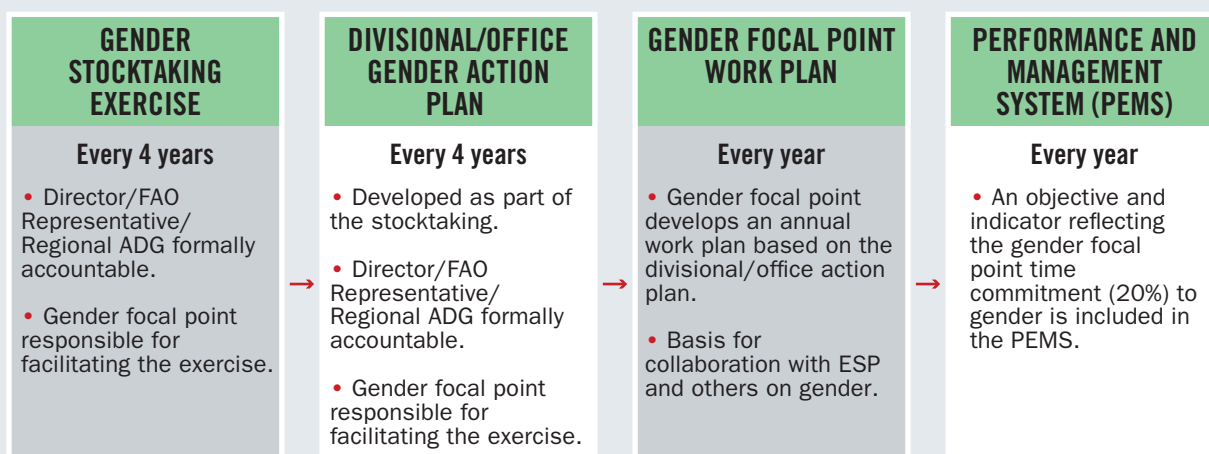
As illustrated in figure 5, the findings of the stocktaking exercise should be used to:

- Identify capacity development needs to design and deliver tailored gender trainings to increase staff gender awareness and capacities.
- Develop a divisional/office Gender Action Plan to address the gaps and challenges identified by the stocktaking exercise.
- Inform the gender focal point annual work plan and the inclusion of a gender objective in the PEMS.
- Raise awareness among colleagues about the gender work of the division/office and on existing gaps.

As a first step, the gender focal points are advised to familiarize themselves with the corporate [Guidelines for gender stocktaking in FAO](#) (FAO 2019) available in English, Spanish and French on the Gender Online Platform, and consult with their ESP counterpart at FAO headquarters and the Regional Officer to agree on the time frame.

FIGURE 5

GENDER STOCKTAKING EXERCISE



A Gender TIP on the gender stocktaking exercise is available on the Gender Online Platform.

3.1.3. The Country Gender Assessment

The Country Gender Assessment (CGA)²⁷ responds to the seventh minimum standard of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality.²⁸ The CGA enables the decentralized offices to build a solid knowledge based on priority gender concerns and information on how the country addresses gender equality issues in agriculture and rural development. The CGA is also one of the gender mainstreaming requirements assessed in the country office audits conducted by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), *presented in fact box 3*.

The findings and recommendations of the CGA can be used to:

- Integrate main gender considerations in the country level planning and programming, notably the Country Programming Framework (CPF);²⁹
- Provide policy and technical advice to government entities and other stakeholders on critical gender issues;
- Provide useful information on the situation of rural women to the UN Country Team CEDAW Report, and for the formulation and implementation of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework](#) (UN SDCF),³⁰ which is the joint UN Programming Framework at country level.

As a first step, the gender focal points are advised to familiarize themselves with the [Guide to prepare a Country Gender Assessment](#) (FAO 2019) available on the Gender Online Platform, and consult with the Regional Gender Officer and the ESP regional counterpart for advice on how to conduct the assessment based on the corporate guide.

The CGA is an extensive exercise that might also require the additional support of an external gender expert/consultant to carry out the exercise.

FACT BOX 3

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN COUNTRY OFFICE AUDITS

Within the framework of country office audits, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) considers gender mainstreaming on a regular basis. In 2019, for example, OIG assessed the controls and actions taken on gender mainstreaming for 12 country audits.

Based on the minimum standards of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality for which the FAORs are held accountable, the OIG assesses if:

- All staff have knowledge and capacity on gender equality and women's empowerment to mainstream gender;
- Gender focal points have enough resources allocated (time and adequate budget) to carry out their roles;
- A Country Gender Assessment has been carried out as part of the Country Programming Framework (CPF);
- The CPF includes gender-sensitive outputs and indicators;
- A gender stocktaking exercise has been carried out to assess the level of gender integration (including the application of gender markers) and that a corresponding Gender Action Plan has been developed; and
- The Country Annual Reports include progress made on gender equality linked to CPF outputs and KPIs.

²⁷ Published CGAs are available on the Gender website: <http://www.fao.org/gender/resources/country-assessments/en/>

²⁸ Minimum standard 7: "Country offices periodically carry out a Country Gender Assessment to provide national/international partners with an updated profile on gender and agriculture and inform country planning."

²⁹ To support a gender-responsive CPF, the gender focal point is advised to raise awareness about the recommendations of the CGA.

³⁰ Endorsed by the UN General Assembly as the "most important instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at country level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda" (UNDG 2019).

3.2. Staff learning and awareness raising

To raise awareness about gender equality and women's empowerment and strengthen the knowledge and skills of colleagues, gender focal points are advised to:

- Raise gender awareness and invite colleagues to complete the gender-related online courses available on the [Gender Playlist](#), for example [Gender in Food and Nutrition Security](#).
- Remind colleagues to complete the mandatory online course for all staff: [Achieving Gender Equality in FAO's work](#).
- Help colleagues to become familiar with the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and other key frameworks such as the CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- Identify the learning needs of colleagues for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, and support the organization of tailor-made training activities.

The gender stocktaking exercise helps identify the staff learning needs of the division/office. To organize a training workshop, gender focal points are recommended to consult the Regional Gender Officers and colleagues in the ESP Gender Team to assist them with the preparation of training materials, facilitation of the workshop and for registering training workshops at you@fao.org.³¹

3.3. Technical support

Gender focal points in technical FAO headquarters divisions and in the decentralized offices are expected to raise awareness and support colleagues with the integration of gender dimensions in FAO's project cycle. There are three gender requirements in the project cycle that gender focal points should be aware of: *the gender markers; the Environmental and Social Standard 8 on gender equality; and the gender criteria under sustainability* at the appraisal stage of a project.

Gender focal points in decentralized offices are also expected to raise awareness and support the integration of gender-sensitive outputs and indicators in the CPF (ideally with support of the CGA), which will be explained more in detail in the last part of this section.

3.3.1. The gender markers

The gender focal points can support the integration of gender markers in their offices/divisions in the following ways:

- Disseminate the guidelines: [Guide to mainstream gender in FAO's project cycle](#);³²
- Support colleagues, who may ask for advice/technical support;
- Support colleagues with the assignment of gender markers; and
- Collect lessons learned to be disseminated.

The ESP Gender Team at FAO headquarters is available to provide technical assistance/guidance with the assignment of the gender markers and to address capacity development needs.³³

³¹ A [Gender TIP](#) on how to register workshops and trainings on you@fao.org is available on the Gender Online Platform.

³² Provides guidance on how to mainstream gender in the project cycle, including how to conduct a gender analysis and the formulation of gender-sensitive indicators.

The gender markers are one of the UN-SWAP 2.0 requirements that aim to facilitate gender mainstreaming into project planning and implementation. It is a coding system that helps project formulators to self-assess their intervention from a very early stage of development (concept note) and indicate the extent to which a project plans to address gender equality and/or women's empowerment.

Gender markers in FAO are based on the assumption that all projects and programmes are expected to consider and address the gender dimensions. The only exception is for projects that do not include any human or social component (such as the creation of a Soil Information System, as illustrated in figure 6 below), which can then be safely coded as G0.

The other gender markers describe different ways in which gender is “mainstreamed” in the project: through dedicated outputs (G1) or systematically mainstreamed (G2a). The marker G2b indicates that the project's main objective is to promote gender equality and/or women's empowerment.

There must be a correspondence between the marker assigned and how gender dimensions are integrated in the project document, for example in its Logical Framework (LogFrame). A project that is coded G2a or G2b, but has no gender-related activity, output or indicator in its LogFrame, will be considered inaccurate at the stage of appraisal and approval.

FIGURE 6**TABLE OF FAO'S GENDER MARKERS**

MARKER	DESCRIPTION	APPROACH	EXAMPLE OF INTERVENTIONS
G0	Gender is not relevant to the project because this has no human or social component.	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a national Soil Information System. • Establishment of a food price monitoring mechanism.
G1	The project will address gender equality, but only in some components (e.g. through specific outputs or activities).	Gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A capacity-development programme on climate-smart agriculture that includes a module on gender equality. • A project that establishes Farmer Fields Schools and sets a quota for women's participation.
G2a	Gender is systematically integrated in all outputs, but it is not its main objective.	Gender mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A project aimed to strengthen farmers' access to technologies, which targets women and men based on their different productive role.
G2b	The project's main objective is to promote gender equality and/or women's empowerment.	Targeted interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A project that specifically targets women's participation and leadership in producers' organizations. • Support provided to national government in developing a Gender Strategy and Implementation Plan.

³³ The gender stocktaking exercise analyses the assignment of gender markers in a division's/office's project portfolio and helps to identify capacity development needs.

3.3.2. The Environmental and Social Standard on gender equality

The Environmental and Social Standards are designed to mitigate the risk of unexpected harmful consequences and improve FAO's environmental and social performance. All FAO projects undergo an Environmental and Social Screening during the project identification phase.

Standard **8 on gender equality** identifies **key requirements** to which FAO projects and programmes must comply:

- **Combating discriminatory practice** (i.e. not discriminate against women or girls or reinforce gender-based discrimination and/or inequalities).
- **Providing equal opportunities for men and women to participate in and benefit** (by analyzing gender-differentiated needs and monitoring the impacts of interventions on women and men).

At the identification phase, project formulators are asked to assess their proposal against three main questions in the **Project Environmental and Social Screening Checklist**:

- *Have the needs, priorities and constraints of both women and men been taken into consideration?*
- *Does the intervention promote women's and men's equitable access to and control over productive resources and services?*
- *Does it foster their equal participation in institutions and decision-making processes?*

As with the gender markers, the gender focal points can support colleagues by raising awareness, providing technical advice/support and by disseminating the guidelines: [Guide to mainstream gender in FAO's project cycle](#).

3.3.3. Gender criteria under sustainability

All projects undergo a quality assurance appraisal by the relevant Project and Programme Review Committee (PPRC)³⁴ and gender equality is one of the sustainability criterion reviewed.

The appraisal includes the following two questions:

1. The project takes into consideration the priorities, opportunities, needs, constraints and knowledge of both women and men, as identified by the gender analysis; and
2. The project includes activities and outputs that address gender inequalities and aim at ensuring that women and men benefit equally from the intervention (focus on: equal access to productive resources and services; equal opportunity to influence decision-making; equal access and benefit from economic opportunities; and equal distribution of work burden).

Gender focal points can support colleagues by raising awareness about this requirement and by providing technical advice/support and by disseminating the guidelines: [Guide to mainstream gender in FAO's project cycle](#).

³⁴ The PPRC is responsible for reviewing the project's compliance with the FAO Policy on Gender Equality for all projects with a budget of more than USD 500 000. The ESP Gender Team and the Regional Gender Officers are conducting the appraisal in their function as PPRC Focal Points.

3.3.4. A gender-responsive Country Programming Framework

The Country Programming Framework (CPF) is the main tool for country-level strategic prioritization and overall medium-term country-level programming. It also represents FAO's input to the national development frameworks and planning cycles, and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UN SDCF).

Gender focal points in decentralized offices can play an important role in promoting a gender-responsive CPA, and gender focal points are advised to raise awareness and sensitize colleagues (FAORs and the CPF Country Core Teams) on the requirements of gender-responsive outputs and indicators in the CPF.³⁵

The findings and recommendations of the Country Gender Assessment report represents an essential source of information on gender-related priorities to be integrated in the CPF. gender focal points can also disseminate the guidelines [Country Programming Framework: Integrating gender issues](#).

4.1. Resource mobilization

In consultation with technical colleagues, the gender focal points are encouraged to explore opportunities to mobilize resources for gender-related activities.

To raise additional funds, the gender focal points are encouraged to use the budget available at the end of the year or biennium to access unspent funds. For quick access to funding it is key to have project proposals (concept notes) and ToRs prepared for hiring of consultants. Other ways of unlocking available funds towards gender-related activities in the office/division are:

- Identify projects that have a potential towards gender equality and make recommendations to the responsible technical officer;
- Lobby with managers to develop gender responsive project proposals; and
- Propose gender-related activities using leftover funds from projects that are about to be closed.

A Gender TIP on resource mobilization is available on the Gender Online Platform.

5.1. Partnership and communication

The gender focal points are responsible for facilitating a smooth communication flow within FAO on relevant gender-related information. To facilitate this task, gender focal points are advised to:

- Share with the office/division news, released reports and practical information on gender mainstreaming processes and tools available, shared from the gender focal point network, FAO headquarters and outside sources (local and international partners).
- Document and disseminate good practices and lessons learned from their respective division/office. Experience has shown that there is a wealth of unrecorded gender-related projects, programmes and activities. Find ways to give them visibility by disseminating information locally, regionally and at FAO headquarters, and by including them in the division/office newsletters.

³⁵ One of the gender mainstreaming requirements assessed by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in country audits, see Fact box 3.

- Participate in specific UN commemoration days and activities related to women's empowerment or gender equality, for example, International Day of Rural Women (October 15), International Women's Day (March 8) and report back to FAO headquarters and/or the Regional Office.
- Participate in gender communities of practice and gender networks. This requires the gender focal points based at FAO headquarters to attend the monthly gender focal point meetings, while the gender focal points in decentralized offices are encouraged to participate in the meetings and activities of the UNCTs inter-agency Gender Thematic Groups (GTGs), and try to influence the discussions on gender equality in agriculture, food security and nutrition, and rural development.

Gender focal points in the decentralized offices are also advised to:

- Develop an understanding of the gender architecture in the government (ministries dealing with agriculture and value chains, food security and nutrition, natural resource management) and explore ways of working together.
- Establish a relationship with the ministry responsible for gender equality, for instance through the coordination meetings with the ministry that is usually organized by UN Women.

For additional guidance, see: [*UN Joint Programmes: Integrating gender issues in food security, agriculture and rural development*](#).

6.1. Monitoring and reporting

As a gender focal point you are expected to contribute to the division/office reporting on gender mainstreaming and the gender-related results achieved through technical work.

Technical reporting on gender-related results are reflected in the:

- **Corporate reporting**, i.e. for the preparation of the Medium-Term Review (MTR) and the Programme Implementation Report (PIR). This is an opportunity for the gender focal points both in decentralized offices and technical divisions to ensure that gender-related results are well represented in the reports that the office/division submits to show progress against the organizational outputs, their indicators and qualifiers.

Gender mainstreaming results are reflected in:

- **Corporate reporting under the Policy on Gender Equality and the UN-SWAP 2.0**, prepared on an annual basis, under the coordination of the ESP Gender Team. This task mainly concerns FAO headquarters gender focal points, who are expected to report on the indicators of the UN-SWAP 2.0 and the Policy on Gender Equality that fall under the responsibility of their division (e.g. Office for Human Resources, Office of Communications, and the Office of Evaluation, etc.). The RGOs are responsible for consolidating information from gender focal points in their respective regions.
- **Country Annual Reporting (CAR)** is the main reporting tool at country level on FAO's overall performance in achieving the Country Programming Framework (CPF) outputs or results. It also allows the FAOR/Management of the office to report on the fulfilment of the gender requirements set by the FAO Policy on Gender Equality (e.g. the gender stocktaking exercise, the Country Gender Assessment, etc.) and the work of the gender focal point. There is a specific section dedicated to gender where the gender focal points in country offices are encouraged to contribute.

A Gender TIP on the CAR is available on the Gender Online Platform.

- **UNCT-SWAP Scorecard** promotes improved planning, coordination, programming and results for gender equality and women's empowerment within the UNCTs. The gender focal points in decentralized offices are encouraged to support this exercise through participation in the UNCTs Gender Theme Group (GTG). The RGOs and the ESP Gender Team are available for additional guidance and support.

A Gender TIP on gender reporting is available on the Gender Online Platform.

7.1. Resources and support available through the gender focal point network

- The Gender Help Desk functions as a quick response (SOS) mechanism and supports the gender focal points if the RGO/ESP counterparts are not available. It can be contacted at the following e-mail address: Gender@fao.org.
- [The Gender Online Platform](#) is a SharePoint repository accessible to all the gender focal points. It contains a wealth of information and resources, including guidelines for [gender stocktaking exercise](#), [FAO Gender Tips](#), the newsletter [FAO Gender News](#) and other resources.
- The [official gender focal point list](#) on the Gender Online Platform includes the names and contact details of every gender focal point, along with their position and the ESP counterparts.
- [FAO's gender website](#) provides information on FAO's work on gender, including results from projects and other activities. It also contains a variety of resources and tools such as publications, training materials, e-learning, toolkits and guidelines, videos, etc.
- The [Gender Playlist](#) includes online FAO gender-related courses including the mandatory e-learning course for all staff on gender: [Achieving Gender Equality in FAO's work](#).
- **Counterpart function for FAO headquarters gender focal points:** Each gender focal point has a counterpart from the ESP Gender Team. The counterpart will act as a liaison between the gender focal point and the ESP Gender Team, by providing direct support to the gender focal point in carrying out his/her duties in line with the ToRs.

[Counterpart ToRs are available in English](#) on the Gender Online Platform.

- **Counterpart function for gender focal points in decentralized offices:** The RGO is the main counterpart and provides guidance and supports the gender focal point in his/her respective region in carrying out his/her responsibilities. The RGO is backstopped by an appointed member from the ESP Gender Team whose technical support is also extended to gender focal points in decentralized offices.

Finally, the gender focal points are encouraged to support each other as much as possible to build a strong, dynamic and mutually supportive community of practice that leads to the delivery of results.

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ANNEX I

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR FAO'S GENDER FOCAL POINTS

Terms of reference for FAO gender focal points in decentralized offices

Background

It is globally recognized that achieving gender equality and empowering women is an absolute precondition to break the cycle of poverty and hunger and to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To ensure that gender equality issues are included in all spheres, the UN system has put in place legal and binding instruments,³⁶ and has also established mechanisms to monitor and report on progress.³⁷ As part of the UN system, FAO is obligated to uphold these policies and frameworks in all its actions and interventions.

In 2012, FAO adopted its first corporate Policy on Gender Equality.³⁸ The policy provides a guiding framework for FAO and partners to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment within its mandate, and it reinforces FAO's position as a leader in promoting gender equality in agriculture and rural women's empowerment.

Within this context, FAO, in line with the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, has put in place an institutional architecture for gender – the gender focal point network. The gender focal point network consists of the Gender Team in the Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equity Division, five Regional Gender Officers and over 200 gender focal points (gender focal points) and alternates in divisions at FAO headquarters and in each decentralized office. This mechanism ensures the consistent and coherent delivery of gender work across the Organization, while responding to the needs of Members, resource partners and other stakeholders.

Note: The overall responsibility for ensuring that gender dimensions are fully embedded in the Organization's programme of work is an institutional responsibility; all staff and senior management are accountable.

The gender focal point network

As part of the institutional architecture, the gender focal point network plays a central role in supporting the Organization's efforts to eliminate the gender inequalities that undermine the performance of the agricultural sector. With gender focal points in each division, office, country and subregional office, the gender focal point network is a fundamental resource for raising awareness, lobbying, backstopping and supporting the Organization in implementing its Policy on Gender Equality, addressing the needs of Members and in meeting the UN requirements for gender equality and women's empowerment.

³⁶ Some of the legal instruments: Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), UN ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 on Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system and *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*.

³⁷ UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP) <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability>.

³⁸ The FAO Policy on Gender Equality was updated in 2020 to be better aligned with international frameworks, such as the SDGs and UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) 2.0.

Expected requirement for gender focal points in decentralized offices³⁹

Each gender focal point in the decentralized office will act as a resource person on gender mainstreaming and will serve as a catalyst for gender issues in their country/subregional office; he/she will also advocate for increased attention to and support the integration of gender issues in the delivery of the country's/subregion's programme of work. He/she will:

- Be able to dedicate 20 percent of their time to gender-related work and insert a dedicated objective and performance indicator in the Performance Evaluation and Management System (PEMS).⁴⁰
- Become familiar with the FAO Policy on Gender Equality, its implementation and monitoring framework.
- Be expected to further develop their gender-related competence through available online gender courses, trainings and support from gender specialists in regional offices and ESP.
- Take the mandatory e-learning course for gender focal points on [Gender in Food and Nutrition Security](#) and the corporate mandatory e-learning on gender: [Achieving Gender equality in FAO's work](#).

Duties and responsibilities

Staff learning and awareness raising

- Acquire knowledge and gender-related skills and develop an understanding of the gender equality issues related to FAO's work in the context of the country's needs.
- Identify the most relevant gender issues in the country, subregion and region.
- Raise awareness on the relevance of gender issues to the country/subregional/regional office's programme of work.
- Raise awareness and help colleagues, project team members and national counterparts to become familiar with the FAO Policy on Gender Equality so that they can align their work with its objectives and strategy.
- Inform colleagues of the availability of online gender training courses and encourage them to take the courses.
- Identify the needs of colleagues for gender information and training. Together with the Regional Gender Officer and ESP Gender Team, assist in organizing staff learning activities.
- Support and participate in gender activities, communities of practice and gender networks, such as the Theme Groups on Gender under the UN Country Teams (where applicable).
- Share gender-related knowledge products and relevant good practices, lessons learned and any other information relevant to the work of the country/subregional office.

³⁹ The position of the gender focal point is not linked to the promotion of gender parity, work/life issues, harassment, including sexual harassment, and a gender-sensitive work environment. These are workplace issues that fall under the responsibility of the Human Resources Division.

⁴⁰ Based on the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP).

Oversight and work planning

- Maintain an overview of the gender-related work in the country/subregional office.
- Initiate and support the development of a Country Gender Assessment with the assistance of a gender expert and under the guidance of the Regional Gender Officer. Disseminate the report among national stakeholders, promoting its use in the formulation of Country Programming Frameworks, projects and other country-level initiatives.
- Carry out a gender stocktaking exercise within the first six months of taking up the assignment, providing it was not done within the last four years. Carry out and update every four years. Present the findings and recommendations to the FAO Representative and colleagues in the country/subregional office.
- Prepare an action plan, based on the stocktaking report, to address the gaps and weaknesses in mainstreaming gender.
- Develop an annual work plan that reflects the specific activities related to gender that he/she will carry out and include an objective in the PEMS. The results from the stocktaking exercise, regional gender strategy and the Country Gender Assessment can be used as a basis, if readily available.

Technical support related to gender

- Support the Management in the country/subregional office in fulfilling the requirements of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality.
- Collect and share information (and encourage and support colleagues in the office to do the same), including sex-disaggregated statistics to assess the implications of gender equality and women's empowerment issues in FAO's areas of work.
- In consultation with the ESP and regional office gender teams, provide technical guidance to colleagues in using tools to better integrate gender issues in their work, such as gender assessments and the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data.
- Screen FAO-led projects, programmes and normative work and provide technical support and guidance for the inclusion of gender issues, including the use of gender markers and gender-sensitive indicators.
- In consultation with FAO technical officers, explore opportunities for resource mobilization for gender-related work.
- Together with the Regional Gender Officer, champion, participate and support the integration of gender in the Country Programming Framework and other processes and guiding frameworks.

Partnerships and communication

- Keep senior management and colleagues informed and updated on gender-related information, results and requirements related to the work of the country/subregional office.
- Identify gender experts who can support FAO's programme of work in the country/subregional office.
- Support consultative processes and cooperation between the country/subregional office and national and international partners and gender entities (i.e. gender team within UNCTs, UNDAF, gender focal points within national ministries).

- Give visibility to the gender-related results and lessons learned in the work FAO is carrying out in the country/ subregion and share gender-related information (activities, achievements, successes and other) with the Regional Gender Officer and the ESP Gender Team.

Monitoring and reporting

- Inform and assist the FAO Representative of the country or subregion in monitoring gender mainstreaming and gender-related work and support the reporting exercises.
- Prepare an end-of-the-year report on gender-related activities, results and lessons learned through the Programme Planning, Implementation Reporting & Evaluation Support System (PIRES).
- Report to the Regional Gender Officer on annual progress in the implementation of the gender work plan.

The ToRs are available in English, French and Spanish on [the Gender Online Platform](#).

Terms of reference for FAO gender focal points at FAO headquarters

It is globally recognized that achieving gender equality and empowering women is an absolute precondition to break the cycle of poverty and hunger and to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To ensure that gender equality issues are included in all spheres, the UN system has put in place legal and binding instruments,⁴¹ and has also established mechanisms to monitor and report on progress.⁴² As part of the UN system, FAO is obligated to uphold these policies and frameworks in all its actions and interventions.

In 2012, FAO adopted its first corporate Policy on Gender Equality.⁴³ The policy provides a guiding framework for FAO and partners to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment within its mandate, and it reinforces FAO's position as a leader in promoting gender equality in agriculture and rural women's empowerment.

Within this context, FAO, in line with the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, has put in place an institutional architecture for gender – the gender focal point network. The gender focal point network consists of the Gender Team in the Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equity Division, five Regional Gender Officers and over 200 gender focal points and alternates in divisions at FAO headquarters and in each decentralized office. This mechanism ensures the consistent and coherent delivery of gender work across the Organization, while responding to the needs of Members, resource partners and other stakeholders.

Note: The overall responsibility for ensuring that gender dimensions are fully embedded in the Organization's programme of work is an institutional responsibility; all staff and senior management are accountable.

The gender focal point network

As part of the institutional architecture, the gender focal point network plays a central role in supporting the Organization's efforts to eliminate the gender inequalities that undermine the performance of the agricultural sector. With gender focal points in each centre, division, office, country and subregional office, the gender focal point network is a fundamental resource for raising awareness, lobbying, backstopping and supporting the Organization in implementing its Policy on Gender Equality, addressing the needs of Members and in meeting the UN requirements for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Expected requirements for gender focal points

Each gender focal point will act as a resource person for gender mainstreaming and will serve as a catalyst for gender issues in his/her centre/division/office he/she will also advocate for increased attention to and support the integration of gender issues in the work of their respective centre/division/office. He/she will:

- Be a senior staff member (preferably P4 or above).⁴⁴
- Be able to dedicate 20 percent of their time to gender-related work and insert a dedicated objective and performance indicator in the Performance Evaluation and Management System (PEMS).⁴⁵

⁴¹ Some of the legal instruments: Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), UN ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 on Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system and *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*.

⁴² UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP) <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability>.

⁴³ The FAO Policy on Gender Equality was updated in 2020 to be better aligned with international frameworks, such as the SDGs and UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) 2.0.

⁴⁴ Based on the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP).

⁴⁵ Based on the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP).

- Become familiar with the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and its implementation and monitoring framework.
- Be expected to further develop their gender-related competence through available online gender courses, trainings and support from gender specialists in ESP.
- Take the mandatory e-learning course for gender focal points on [Gender in Food and Nutrition Security](#) and the corporate mandatory e-learning on gender: [Achieving Gender Equality in FAO's work](#).

Duties and responsibilities

Staff learning and awareness raising

- Acquire knowledge and gender-related skills and develop an understanding of the gender equality issues related to the areas of work of their centre/division/office.
- Identify the needs of colleagues for gender information and training. Together with the ESP Gender Team, assist in organizing staff learning initiatives.
- Raise awareness on the relevance of gender issues to the work of their centre/division/office and advocate for greater attention to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Support and participate in gender communities of practice and gender networks.
- Share knowledge products and relevant good practices, lessons learned and any other relevant information related to the work of their centre/division/office.
- Attend the monthly gender focal point meetings.

Oversight and communication

- Keep senior management and colleagues fully informed on gender-related information, initiatives and requirements related to the work of their centre/division/office.
- Maintain an overview and monitor the gender-related work in their centre/division/office.

Work planning and technical support

- Carry out a gender stocktaking exercise within the first six months of taking up the assignment, providing it was not done within the last four years. Carry out an update every four years. Present the findings and recommendations to the Management and colleagues.
- Facilitate and coordinate the development and implementation of a four-year gender action plan for their centre/division/office, based on the report from the gender stocktaking exercise.
- Develop and implement an annual gender work plan that reflects the specific activities they will carry out in their respective centre/division/office.
- Support the Management in their centre/division/office in fulfilling the requirements of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and in implementing the gender action plan of the centre/division/office.

- Provide technical support and guidance to colleagues in using tools to better integrate gender issues in their work, such as gender assessments, collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data.
- Provide technical support and guidance to the Management team and colleagues in the centre/division/office for inclusion of gender issues in knowledge products, projects and programmes, including gender markers, gender-sensitive indicators and gender-responsive budgeting.

Monitoring and reporting

- Keep managers informed on the requirements of gender-related monitoring and reporting exercises.
- Coordinate the monitoring and implementation of gender-related activities and results.
- Report annually to the Gender team, through the ESP counterpart, on progress made.

The ToRs are available in English on the [Gender Online Platform](#).

ANNEX II

GENDER GLOSSARY

Terms	Definitions
Gender	Gender refers to the socially constructed attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female. It has to do with how our society defines masculinity and femininity in terms of what is appropriate behavior for men and women. Both men and women play a crucial role in the social construction of gender.
Gender equity	Fairness and impartiality in the treatment of men and women in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.
Gender equality	A state in which women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life.
Women's empowerment	Women's increased control over their life through economic advancement and enhanced power and agency.
Gender focal point	The gender focal point supports gender work by raising gender awareness among colleagues and partners, providing technical advice, and disseminating available knowledge and tools to integrate gender issues into FAO's work.
Gender-responsive approaches	Gender-responsive approaches recognize and address the specific needs and priorities of men and women, based on the social construction of gender roles.
Gender-sensitive approaches	Gender-sensitive approaches identify and acknowledge the existing gender differences and inequalities between women and men. Gender is integrated as a means to achieve other objectives without seeking to change structural barriers.
Gender gap	The gap that women face in access to resources, assets, services, education and employment opportunities, as a result of gender discrimination.
Gender transformative approaches	Gender-transformative approaches examine, question and change gender social norms, attitudes, behaviors and social systems that reinforce inequalities. These approaches aim at transforming gender roles and power relations and the mind-sets of individuals, from organization's staff to household members, communities and actors in the market and state.
Gender-based violence	Gender-based violence (GBV) is any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between men and women.
Gender roles	Behaviors, tasks and responsibilities that a society considers appropriate for men, women, boys and girls.
Gender relations	Ways in which society defines the rights, responsibilities and identities of men and women in relation to one another.

Terms	Definitions
Gender mainstreaming	Gender mainstreaming is a globally recognized strategy for achieving gender equality. It is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated.
Gender analysis	Gender analysis is the study of the different roles of men and women in order to understand what they do, what resources and capacities they have, what their needs and priorities are and the power relations between them. It provides the basis to address inequalities in policies and programmes.
Gender marker	A tool used to code to what extent a project or programme has the potential to contribute to gender equality.

ANNEX III

FAO'S MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020-2030 recognizes that a gender-responsive organizational environment is necessary to achieve progress towards its four gender-equality objectives and to implement its twin-tracked strategy. For this reason, the Policy identifies 17 minimum standards that aim at ensuring that the gender dimensions are adequately integrated in all institutional processes and functions through specific requirements for accountable offices and divisions. The implementation of the minimum standards, which are aligned to the performance indicators of the UN-SWAP 2.0, will be annually monitored and reported to Members as part of the corporate reporting efforts.

Evidence generation

1	FAO systematically collects and incorporates sex-disaggregated data in all its major statistical databases and related SDG platforms. These sex-disaggregated data are analysed and disseminated through FAO knowledge and communication products to expand the evidence base on gender in agriculture, natural resource management, food security and nutrition.
2	FAO provides capacity development to Members to enhance the collection, analysis and use of sex-disaggregated data for SDG monitoring, informed policymaking and programme development.

Strategic planning

3	FAO integrates gender dimensions in its results measurement framework, in alignment with the gender-equality objectives set by this Policy, and systematically plans and measures gender-related results at all levels (SDG/outcome/outputs).
4	A dedicated budget is allocated to gender-related work and reported to governing bodies.
5	Gender expertise is available at headquarters and regional level to support and coordinate FAO's work on gender equality. An Organization-wide network of gender focal points – staff who devote 20 percent of their time to support gender mainstreaming work – is in place and maintained.
6	Centres, divisions and offices (decentralized and at headquarters) carry out a gender stocktaking exercise every four years to assess the extent to which gender is integrated in their work. They are also required to develop a follow-up plan of action to address the identified gaps, set priorities and allocate resources for gender mainstreaming at divisional and office level.

Programme design and implementation

7	Country offices periodically carry out a Country Gender Assessment to provide national/international partners with an updated profile on gender and agriculture and inform country planning. FAO's Country Programming Frameworks integrate gender-related outputs, activities and indicators in their results framework.
8	Projects and programmes integrate gender-related results and indicators, based on the findings of a gender analysis. Their formulation and implementation are guided by specific gender requirements established by the FAO project cycle.
9	All centres, divisions and offices (decentralized and at headquarters) dedicate resources, including TCPs, and implement interventions whose main objective is to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Reporting	
10	FAO annually reports to its governing bodies on the gender-related results achieved under its strategic framework and on the implementation of the minimum standards of this Policy and the performance standards of the UN-SWAP 2.0.
Human resources management	
11	All FAO employees are expected to promote gender equality as part of their work and functions. gender focal points and supervisors are required to include a gender objective/indicator when planning for the Performance Evaluation and Management System (PEMS).
12	FAO implements policies, strategies and specific measures that promote gender parity and foster gender equality in the workplace.
Staff learning	
13	All employees undertake mandatory gender training to acquire an understanding of gender issues related to FAO's mandate. FAO periodically assesses staff capacities and, based on identified needs, provides tailor-made trainings to centres, divisions and offices (decentralized and at headquarters).
14	FAO establishes and maintains corporate incentive and award mechanisms to promote good performance and delivery of gender-related results by decentralized offices and technical divisions.
Evaluation and audit	
15	Evaluation and audit methodologies integrate gender dimensions and gender-specific recommendations are included in the final reports, when relevant.
Resource mobilization	
16	FAO leverages on its partnerships at global and national level to mobilize voluntary contributions to expand and consolidate its work on gender equality and women's empowerment. Financing priorities in this area are regularly presented to resource partners through strategic dialogues, donor consultations and pledging events.
Communication	
17	FAO gives visibility to and promotes gender-related work, including on the results achieved in the implementation of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and the UN-SWAP 2.0, through its corporate and internal communication activities. All FAO public imaging and branding is gender-sensitive.

ANNEX IV

SELECTION OF KEY FAO GENDER PUBLICATIONS

Developing gender-sensitive value chains - A guiding framework: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6462e.pdf>

Developing gender-sensitive value chains - Guidelines for practitioners:
<http://www.fao.org/3/i9212en/I9212EN.pdf>

Empowering Rural Women Powering Agriculture: FAO's work on Gender:
<http://www.fao.org/3/CA2678EN/ca2678en.pdf>

FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020-2030: <http://www.fao.org/3/cb1583en/cb1583en.pdf>

FAO Technical Guides on Gender and Social Protection:
<http://www.fao.org/social-protection/resources/resources-detail/en/c/1170231/>

Gender and food loss in sustainable food value chains - A guiding note:
<http://www.fao.org/3/I8620EN/i8620en.pdf>

Gender and GRAST Tool: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA2693EN/ca2693en.pdf>

Gender and ICTs: Mainstreaming gender in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for agriculture and rural development: <http://www.fao.org/3/I8670EN/i8670en.pdf>

Guidance note on gender-sensitive vulnerability assessments in agriculture:
<http://www.fao.org/3/I7654EN/i7654en.pdf>

How can we protect men, women and children from gender-based violence? Addressing GBV in the food security and agriculture sector: <http://www.fao.org/3/I7928en/I7928EN.pdf>

Meeting our Goals: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6618e.pdf>

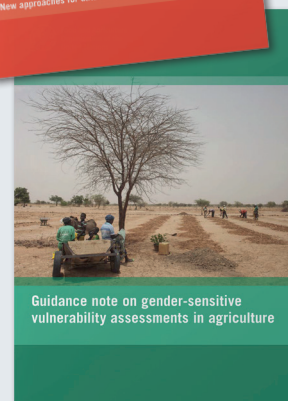
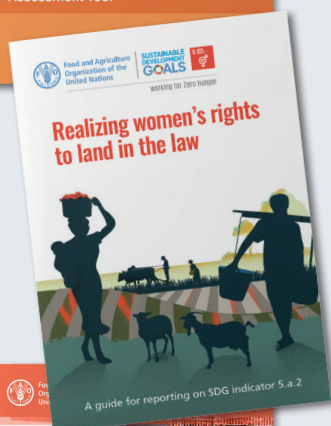
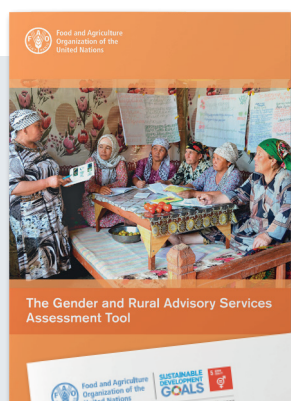
Realizing women's rights to land in the law (SDG 5.a.2): <http://www.fao.org/3/i8785en/I8785EN.pdf>

Running out of time: The reduction of women's work burden in agricultural production:
<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4741e.pdf>

Sex-disaggregated data in agriculture and sustainable resource management:
<http://www.fao.org/3/i8930en/i8930en.pdf>

SOFA 2010-2011: Women in agriculture. Closing the gender gap for development:
<http://www.fao.org/3/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

Women's access to rural finance: challenges and opportunities:
<http://www.fao.org/3/ca5167en/CA5167EN.pdf>



Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture and food systems:

A handbook for gender focal points

Gender focal points are part of the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO's) institutional architecture for gender, and play a key role in supporting the delivery of gender-related work.

This handbook is intended to support the gender focal points, at FAO headquarters and in the decentralized offices, in addressing gender issues in their work. More specifically, the purpose of the handbook is to serve as a comprehensive and practical reference tool for gender focal points to support their respective divisions and offices in complying with the requirements set by the corporate Policy on Gender Equality. It can also serve as a valuable resource for all FAO employees who are interested in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, and to better understand the frameworks and institutional mechanisms that guide and sustain FAO's work on gender.