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Evaluation of FAO's work on gender

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Evaluation of FAO's Work on Gender

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OFFICE OF EVALUATION**

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Acronyms

BPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CGA	Country Gender Assessment
CPE	Country Programme Evaluation
CPF	Country Programming Framework
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ENPARD	European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESP	Social Policies and Rural Institutions Division
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAOR	FAO Representative
FIES	Food Insecurity Experience Scale
FTT	FAO-Thiaroye Technique
GAD PoA	Gender and Development Plan of Action
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
GAPo	Gender in agricultural policies analysis
GCCA	Global Climate Change Alliance
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Fund
GEP	Gender Equality Policy
GEEW	Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
GFP	Gender Focal Point
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
iMIS	Integrated Management Information System
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MS	Minimum Standards
NAIP	National Agriculture Investment Plan
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OED	FAO Office of Evaluation
OCS	Office of Chief Statistician
PAIA	Priority Area for Interdisciplinary Action
PAHO	Pan-American Health Organization
PEMS	Performance Evaluation and Management System
PoA	Plan of Action
PIR	Programme Implementation Report
PIRES	Programme Planning, Implementation Reporting and Evaluation Support System
PSEA	Protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse
RAF	Regional Office for Africa
RAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
REAF	Specialized Meeting on Family Farming of Mercosur
RLC	Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

RNE	Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa
REU	Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
RWEE	Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment
SAFE	Safe Access to Fuel and Energy
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEAGA	Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis
SF	FAO Strategic Framework
SICA	Central American Integration System
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SO	Strategic Objective
SP	Strategic Programme
SOFA	The State of Food and Agriculture (Report)
SOFI	The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (Report)
TCP	Technical Cooperation Programme
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UN-SWAP	UN System-wide Action Plan
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization
WFP	World Food Programme

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Executive summary

1. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) work on gender has evolved over the years, resulting in 2012 in the formulation and endorsement by Members of the Organization's first Policy on Gender Equality (GEP). The Policy was designed as a framework to guide FAO efforts to mainstream gender in all of its technical work.
2. FAO approved its Reviewed Strategic Framework at the 38th Session of the FAO Conference in June 2013, which established gender as a cross-cutting theme to be systematically addressed in all of the Organization's Strategic Objectives.
3. This evaluation will be presented to the Programme Committee at its March 2019 session and then submitted for consideration by the FAO Conference in June 2019.
4. The evaluation process assessed FAO's work on gender equality. It examined the relevance of the GEP as the main guiding instrument for FAO's gender work, the effectiveness of its implementation and the progress made on achieving gender equality in sustainable agricultural production and rural development. Specifically, it reviewed:
 - **Relevance of the GEP:** To what extent has FAO effectively incorporated the key elements of the GEP (including implementation structure) into its programmes and projects?
 - **Effectiveness of FAO's work on gender:** How has FAO's work on gender contributed to the achievement of equality in sustainable agricultural production and rural development for the elimination of hunger?
 - **Partnerships:** How has FAO leveraged partnerships to realize its gender-equality objectives and empower rural women?
 - **Comparative advantage:** What is FAO's comparative advantage when it comes to promoting gender equality?
 - **Lessons learned, enabling factors and challenges:** What are the key lessons learned, enabling factors and challenges that need to be addressed to better support Members in achieving gender-equality targets under internationally agreed development goals and international accords, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)?
5. The evaluation process used a mixed-method approach for data collection, analysis and validation. Sources of data included programme and project documents, evidence from past and ongoing evaluations and a review of relevant literature from FAO and partner organizations. Primary data were gathered mainly from interviews with FAO staff, government partners and other stakeholders involved in FAO's work on gender in selected countries, as well as a survey of gender focal points (GFPs) and FAO Representatives (FAORs), and a benchmark study.

The key messages of the evaluation were as follows:

Message 1. FAO has made significant strides towards achieving its gender-equality results at the institutional and field levels.

6. Gender-equality results vary from country to country and require national ownership for uptake and sustainability. In some countries, there is still insufficient political and financial prioritization by government counterparts and a generally narrow understanding of gender issues (despite the awareness-raising exercises conducted).
7. FAO's work on gender saw its most significant results at the policy and strategy level, where regional and national counterparts were keen to address gender issues. Nevertheless, in most countries, FAO's interventions addressed gender gaps at community level, mainly through women's economic empowerment.

Message 2. The GEP remains relevant to FAO's overall mandate and strategic goals. However, it should be updated to take into account external developments pertinent to FAO's mandate and be accompanied by an action plan for operationalization and monitoring of progress.

8. The GEP needs to reflect external developments, such as the adoption of the SDGs, as well as FAO's emerging areas of work, such as climate change, migration, resilience building and social protection.
9. In addition to updating the GEP, it is important to develop an action plan, including short- to medium-term gender-equality targets, to ensure adequate operationalization and the monitoring of progress on the Organization's high-level policy objectives.

Message 3. FAO has invested in several mechanisms to institutionalize gender mainstreaming, but needs to further strengthen the capacity of Technical Officers to mainstream gender in their work.

10. The mechanisms introduced to institutionalize gender mainstreaming include placing Gender Officers in all Regional Offices, strengthening the GFP network, formulating regional strategies and implementing stock-taking exercises.
11. That said, FAO also needs to strengthen the capacity of Technical Officers to mainstream gender in their work, particularly through customized advice and support from Gender Officers and GFPs in the decentralized offices.

Message 4. FAO has produced a substantial number of technical guidelines and a considerable amount of awareness-raising material on gender. However, these knowledge products need to be better contextualized and disseminated for optimal use at decentralized level.

12. FAO has produced quality knowledge products, such as the framework on gender-sensitive value chains, with a specific focus on social sustainability; a training guide and module on gender-sensitive climate-smart agriculture, which collated, tried and tested good practices and innovative approaches (designed together with CGIAR and the World Bank) and on resilience and humanitarian responses; specific guidance materials on gender-responsive disaster risk reduction; and materials on gender-based violence prevention and mitigation.

13. These knowledge products have not been used in an optimal manner and have lacked contextualization and feedback from field staff, especially at country level. Field staff need to be involved in the preparation of these knowledge products for proper contextualization and eventual utilization.

Message 5. FAO has established useful partnerships, mostly on an ad hoc basis and mainly for project implementation. FAO should leverage its proximity to rural communities and its track record of working in agriculture to position itself as a key partner in addressing gender issues in rural areas, as well as to build strategic and long-term partnerships.

14. Many partners still see FAO primarily as a technical agricultural agency, limiting the Organization's efforts to engage in social and normative issues. FAO has not systematically used its recognized knowledge of the agricultural/rural sector to build strategic and long-term partnerships with key actors working on gender. FAO should leverage its proximity to rural communities and its track record of working in agriculture to position itself as a key partner in addressing gender issues in rural areas.

Message 6. Sustaining the above achievements, bridging the identified gaps and expanding the reach of FAO gender work will require continued strong staff commitment to pursuing the gender-equality agenda, starting with senior managers and the heads of field offices. Continued Member engagement will also be needed to achieve the commitments on gender equality set out in the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

1 Introduction

1. At its 119th session in May 2016, the FAO Programme Committee requested an evaluation of the Organization's work on gender. At its 154th session in June 2016, the FAO Council endorsed the request and mandated that the report be submitted for consideration by the Conference in 2019.

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

2. The evaluation has been carried out in response to the Governing Bodies' request. Its overall purpose is to provide accountability to Members on FAO's work on gender, with particular emphasis on the implementation of FAO's GEP.

1.2 Scope and objectives

3. The evaluation covers FAO's work on implementing the GEP at corporate, regional and country level between March 2012 and December 2017, from GEP endorsement to the end of the Medium-Term Plan (MTP) 2014–2017.
4. The evaluation's main objectives were to assess how gender equality and women's empowerment were mainstreamed into the design and implementation of FAO's programmes and projects and to identify FAO's contribution to closing the gender gap. The evaluation was also tasked with identifying lessons learned from implementation of the GEP, FAO's contributions to international commitments and FAO's comparative in promoting gender equality.
5. The evaluation was guided by five overarching questions (see Table 1).

Table 1: Evaluation questions

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent has FAO effectively incorporated the key elements of the GEP (including implementation structure) into its programmes and projects? 2. How has FAO's work on gender contributed to the achievement of equality in sustainable agricultural production and rural development for the elimination of hunger? 3. How has FAO leveraged partnerships to realize its gender-equality objectives and to empower rural women? 4. What is FAO's comparative advantage when it comes to promoting gender equality? 5. What are the key lessons learned, enabling factors and challenges that need to be addressed to support Members in better achieving the gender-equality targets of internationally agreed development goals and international accords, such as the SDGs and CEDAW? |
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1.3 Methodology

6. The evaluation was conducted by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) with the support of a team composed of external experts with geographic and thematic expertise. The evaluation benefitted from inputs and comments from FAO's Social Policies and Rural Institutions Division (ESP) and regional Gender Teams throughout the evaluation process.¹

¹ The evaluation process started with an evaluability assessment to better define the evaluation's scope and focus areas, based on which the terms of reference were formulated and a theory of change reconstructed in collaboration with the Gender Team in ESP.

7. The evaluation relied on multiple sources of primary and secondary data and used a mixed-method approach for data analysis, triangulation and validation. Sources and methods of collection included semi-structured interviews, document reviews,² a meta-synthesis of evidence from evaluations conducted by OED,³ a survey of GFPs and FAORs, and a benchmark study.⁴
8. The Evaluation Team visited FAO's Regional Offices, as well as 13 countries in the five regions, to carry out in-depth studies:⁵
 - **Africa:** Ghana, Kenya and the Gambia
 - **Asia:** Nepal and the Philippines
 - **Europe and Central Asia:** Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey
 - **Latin America:** Guatemala and Paraguay
 - **Near East and North Africa:** Mauritania, Tunisia and Syria
9. These countries were selected based on purposeful sampling strategies, offering information-rich cases to illustrate the type, quality and results of FAO's gender-related work. The sample also provides an in-depth understanding of the reasons for the success and/or failure of certain interventions and evidence of FAO's comparative advantage in gender-related areas.
10. As gender is a cross-cutting theme for FAO, the Strategic Objectives (SOs) underpinned country selection to ensure comprehensive thematic and strategic representation. Factors including Regional Initiatives or a Strategic Programme (SP) focus and the budget size of projects tagged G2a or G2b6 were used as proxies of institutional commitment in country selection. To identify the intensity (quantity) and distribution (diversity according to the SO-related area) of gender work, the following factors were analysed for each country: (1) the existence and type of relevant or flagship programme/project, as identified by document reviews and evaluations of the five SOs; (2) the existence and type of gender-related activity reported by the country office between 2014 and 2017 (Integrated Management Information System, or iMIS); (3) the availability of a Country Gender Assessment (CGA); and (4) whether

² For example, Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) and Country Gender Assessments (CGAs), project documents and reports.

³ Such as the gender annexes and regional reports of the evaluation of FAO's five SOs, FAO's contribution in Barbados and Members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, the Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) of Guatemala, CPE of Honduras, CPE of Nicaragua, CPE of Mexico, CPE of Cameroon, CPE of Guinea, CPE of Niger, CPE of Burkina Faso, CPE of Cote D'Ivoire, CPE of Kenya, CPE of Tanzania, CPE of Egypt, CPE of Saudi Arabia, CPE of the West Bank and Gaza, CPE of Kyrgyzstan, CPE of Bhutan, CPE of Cambodia, CPE of East Timor and CPE of Pakistan. For the list of project evaluations consulted, please see Annex 2.

⁴ The Evaluation Team carried out a benchmarking study of the Rome-based agencies – the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) – and two specialized agencies – the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) – for learning purposes.

⁵ The evaluation also benefitted from the ongoing CPEs in Burundi and Uganda and from the evaluation of the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) function.

⁶ Gender markers enable the division of FAO's project portfolio into four categories: G0 – the project does not address gender equality; G1 – the project addresses gender equality only in some respects; G2a – the project addresses gender equality in a systematic way, but it is not one of its main objectives; G2b – the project addresses gender equality and/or women's empowerment as its main focus.

the country was recommended by ESP, the SP teams, or Regional Offices. Four profiles were identified: (a) countries with high institutional commitment and substantial gender-related work reported; (b) countries with low institutional commitment and substantial gender-related work reported; (c) countries with high institutional commitment and no/limited gender-related work reported; and (d) countries with low institutional commitment and no/limited gender-related work reported.

11. The assessment of the GEP included a review of its relevance to the Organization's mandate and its effectiveness in the context of major institutional change, such as the revision of the Strategic Framework and FAO's ongoing decentralization efforts. It included an assessment of the GEP's goals and rationale, the theory of change (including intended results, how the change occurs and underlying assumptions), the strategy for realizing its objectives, implementation responsibilities and accountability structure.
12. Further details on data-collection methods, sources and selection criteria for the field visits are described in the terms of reference⁷ (Annex 1).

1.4 Limitations

13. The lack of systematic compilation of gender-related interventions was a limitation. The Evaluation Team had to reconstruct the gender portfolio for the entire period under evaluation (2012–2017). This reconstruction consumed a considerable amount of time and effort, reducing the time available for field visits.
14. As FAO's endorsement of the GEP preceded the Reviewed Strategic Framework 2010–2019,⁸ the change from a standalone objective to a cross-cutting Strategic Framework theme made it more difficult to collect data from corporate sources, especially in terms of the GEP's results and impact.
15. The absence of a theory of change defining clear outcomes that linked FAO implementation mechanisms to the GEP objectives posed an additional challenge in identifying results that could be directly attributed to FAO's interventions. To address this issue, the Evaluation Team, together with the ESP Gender Team, developed a theory of change.

⁷ Including a theory of change

⁸ The review was conducted in 2013.

2 Context and description of FAO's work on gender

16. This section of the report sets out the context and key highlights of FAO's work on gender.⁹

2.1 Context

17. As indicated in The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) report 2010–2011, women constitute over 40 percent of the world's agricultural labour force and make an important contribution to food production and care of households. However, in many contexts, women still have less access to productive resources, services and decent work. Women, especially rural women, are usually the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society. The SOFA report noted that if women could access the same productive resources as men, their farm yields could increase by 20 percent to 30 percent. This could raise total agricultural production in developing countries by 2.5 percent to 4 percent and, in turn, reduce the number of hungry people globally by 12 percent to 17 percent.
18. In 2006, the UN System-Wide Policy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment was introduced, followed in 2012 by the UN System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) for Gender Equality. A UN Women report on gender equality (2015), taking stock of 20 years of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action,¹⁰ concluded that while there had been some good progress, no country had achieved gender equality, and that the overall landscape was one of unequal implementation and even reversal in several areas.
19. The post-2015 development agenda¹¹ reinforced the importance of gender equality as a global objective. The international development community stepped up its commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, deeming them to be development objectives in their own right (for example, by establishing SDG 5, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, and by including critical elements for the achievement of gender equality in other SDGs).
20. Although the international development community and, in particular, UN agencies such as UN Women,¹² have continued to make statements on the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment, significant gender gaps remain. According to the Global Gender Gap Index (2017),¹³ an average gap of 32 percent remains worldwide across the four index criteria for achieving universal gender parity, compared with an average gap of 31.7 percent in 2016.
21. Figure 1 illustrates the gender gap for different regions as of 2017.¹⁴

⁹ Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, girls and boys.

¹⁰ Conducted in 2015 by UN Women (please see www.unwomen.org, www.beijing20.unwomen.org, www.facebook.com/unwomen and www.twitter.com/un_women)

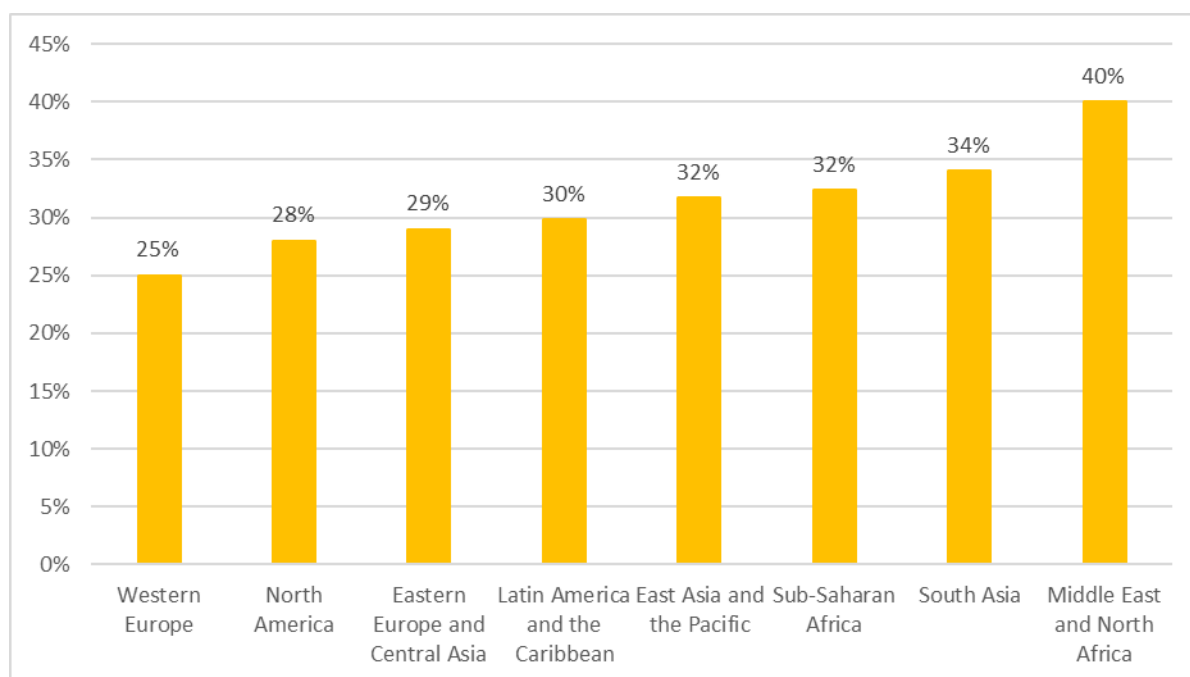
¹¹ Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), other internal conferences

¹² UN Women (2017), *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda*

¹³ The Global Gender Gap Index was first introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006 as a framework for capturing the magnitude of gender-based disparities and tracking progress over time. The Index benchmarks national gender gaps based on economic, education, health and political criteria and provides country rankings that allow for effective comparisons of regions and income groups.

¹⁴ The Global Gender Gap Index

Figure 1: Gender gap for different regions as of 2017



Source: World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index

2.2 The evolution and structure of FAO's work on gender

22. FAO has worked on promoting the role of women in agriculture and rural development since 1949. In 1981, the Organization was entrusted with the responsibility of assisting Members to report on CEDAW Article 14.
23. FAO's specific programming on gender can be traced back to 1989, when the Plan of Action for Integrating Women in Development (1989–1995) was launched. Following the endorsement of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, FAO implemented three six-year Gender and Development Plans of Action (GAD PoA): 1996–2001, 2002–2007 and 2008–2013.¹⁵
24. In 2007, an independent external evaluation of FAO was conducted. Its recommendations informed the Strategic Framework 2010–2019¹⁶ and gender equity was elevated to the level of an SO (SO K) focused on achieving gender equity of access to resources, goods, services and decision-making in rural areas. Lead responsibility for SO K was assigned to the Gender Team in the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division.
25. Between 2010 and 2011, two major reviews of the Organization's commitment to gender equality were undertaken: the Gender Audit¹⁷ and the evaluation of FAO's work on Gender

¹⁵ The GAD PoA 2002–2007 was approved by the FAO Conference. Through the GAD PoA, FAO set up two main operational mechanisms to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the Organization's work. These were the 'gender criteria' in the checklists elaborated by the Project and Programme Review Committee (PPRC) and the GFP network. At the same time, gender mainstreaming had also become one of the 16 Priority Areas for Interdisciplinary Action (PAIAs) in FAO's MTP 2002–2007 (the PAIAs were discontinued around 2005).

¹⁶ C2007/A.I Recommendations 7.1 and 7.2 set the framework for a multi-year process of change and provided a specific timetable for the first steps through an Immediate Plan of Action (IPA) with a duration of three years.

¹⁷ Managed by the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division, with the support of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), now UN Women.

and Development (GAD).¹⁸ The former focused on institutional arrangements, while the latter assessed FAO's performance in implementing two GAD PoAs (2002–2011) and SO K. As a result of both exercises, in 2012, the GEP was formulated and endorsed by Members as the framework for guiding FAO's efforts to mainstream gender into its technical work.

26. In 2013, FAO approved a Reviewed Strategic Framework that established gender as a cross-cutting theme. It clearly stated that "under all strategic objectives, gender-related issues will be addressed in a systematic way and progress made closely monitored". Nevertheless, none of the SPs explicitly mention gender equality in their results frameworks at outcome level; only in the design of SP3 were two gender-related outputs explicitly included in the title. The SPs have generally integrated gender at the output-indicator level: SP3 has adopted five gender output indicators, SP1 has one gender indicator (among its eight output indicators) and SP2 has one gender indicator (in its 12 output indicators).
27. Coordination, guidance and oversight of FAO's gender work was assigned to the ESP division, while the SP teams, technical departments and decentralized offices were made responsible for incorporating gender-related aspects. In 2014, with the review of the MTP 2014–2017, Objective 6 was introduced to reflect expected improvements in the delivery of knowledge, quality and services. It was to be measured by key performance indicators for technical leadership, statistics, gender, governance, nutrition and climate change. A non-exhaustive list of the evolution of FAO's gender work can be found in Box 1.

Box 1: The evolution of FAO's gender work

1949: FAO promotes the role of women in agriculture and rural development
1981: FAO entrusted with the responsibility of assisting Members to report on Article 14 of the CEDAW
1989: FAO Women in Development PoA 1989–1995
1996: FAO Women in Development PoA 1996–2001
2002: Gender and Development PoA 2002–2007
2007: Independent external evaluation of FAO
2009: New Strategic Framework 2010–2019 – SO on gender equity in access to resources, goods, services and decision making in rural areas (SO K)
2010: FAO Gender Audit (focus on organizational mechanisms and processes)
2011: Evaluation of FAO's work on gender and development (focus on performance)
2012: FAO GEP formulated and endorsed by the Programme Committee
2013: Reviewed FAO Strategic Framework, MTP 2014–2017 – gender equality mainstreamed across FAO's Strategic Objectives and programmes
2016: Reviewed FAO Strategic Framework, MTP 2018–2021 – gender still a cross-cutting theme and included in Objective 6
2017: MTP 2018–2021 includes a revised monitoring system (additional or revised qualifiers and indicators on gender under the SPs; revised key performance indicators for Outcome 6.3)

28. The GEP specifies FAO's goal and objectives for gender equality and establishes an accountability structure to ensure oversight and the achievement of results. According to the GEP, FAO is expected to work in two main ways to achieve its gender equality objectives: (1) by mainstreaming gender in its work (in other words, by systematically examining and

¹⁸ Requested by the Programme Committee in October 2008

addressing both women's and men's needs, priorities and experiences as part of the development of policies, normative standards, programmes, projects and knowledge-building activities) and (2) by conducting programmes and projects that specifically target areas where gender gaps are so large that women do not have equal access to resources and opportunities.

29. The GEP introduced five objectives to guide FAO's work in advancing equality of voice, agency and access to resources and services between women and men by 2025. These are:
 1. Women participate equally with men as decision-makers in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies and programmes.
 2. Women and men have equal access to and control over decent employment and income, land and other productive resources.
 3. Women and men have equal access to goods and services for agricultural development, as well as to markets.
 4. Women's work burden is reduced by 20 percent through improved technologies, services and infrastructure.
 5. The share of total agricultural aid committed to projects related to women and gender equality is increased to 30 percent.
30. The GEP noted that achieving these objectives required a collaborative effort between governments, UN agencies, bilateral development agencies, civil-society organizations and the private sector. FAO established a specific structure to support implementation of the GEP, combining interlinked mechanisms and processes, such as minimum standards, an accountability framework, responsibilities for gender work (mainstreaming and reporting), implementation arrangements, delivery mechanisms and core functions.

Minimum standards

31. FAO established 15 minimum standards – 13 for gender mainstreaming and two for women-specific targeted interventions – as well as appropriate institutional processes and mechanisms to ensure their implementation by either 2015 or 2017, depending on the standard. An accountability framework¹⁹ was adopted to ensure implementation of the GEP, which delineates responsibilities at various levels of the Organization. The extent to which the minimum standards have been achieved (as of 2016) is included in the evaluation's terms of reference.

¹⁹ Annex A of the GEP

Table 2: Minimum standards for gender mainstreaming

Minimum standards for gender mainstreaming	
1	All major FAO statistical databases incorporate sex-disaggregated data where relevant and as available.
2	FAO invests in strengthening the capacity of Members to develop, analyse and use sex-disaggregated data in policy analysis and programme/project planning and evaluation.
3	For all SOs, a gender analysis is carried out and a gender action plan is developed; progress on gender equality is measured for all corporate outcomes.
4	A financial target for resource allocation for the GEP is set and met.
5	A CGA is undertaken as part of country programming.
6	A gender-equality stocktaking exercise is conducted for all services to provide a basis for better implementation of gender mainstreaming, including measuring progress and performance.
7	Gender analysis is incorporated into the formulation of all field programmes and projects, and gender-related issues are taken into account in project approval and implementation processes.
8	All programme reviews and evaluations fully integrate gender analysis and report on the gender-related impact of the area they are reviewing.
9	A mandatory gender-mainstreaming capacity-development programme is developed and implemented for all professional staff and managers. This programme will be tailored to the specific needs of different units in FAO headquarters and at regional and country levels and conducted by trainers with subject-matter expertise relevant to those units.
10	Minimum competencies in gender analysis are specified and all managers and professional staff are required to meet them.
11	Each technical department establishes a gender-equality screening process for all normative work, programmes and knowledge products.
12	An assessment of the contribution to achieving FAO's gender equality objectives is included in the Performance Evaluation and Management System (PEMS) of all professional staff.
13	Human and financial resources and normative and operational results related to gender equality from headquarters to country level are systematically tracked and reported to FAO Governing Bodies and to the UN System.
Minimum standards for women-specific targeted interventions by 2017	
14	Thirty percent of FAO's operational work and budget at country and regional levels are allocated to women-specific targeted interventions.
15	The share of the technical cooperation programme (TCP) portfolio allocated to programmes and projects related to gender equality is increased from 9 percent to 30 percent.

Responsibilities for gender work: Coordination, backstopping, mainstreaming and reporting

32. Under the Reviewed Strategic Framework, the coordination of FAO's work on gender equality remained the responsibility of the Gender Unit in ESP, which is also responsible for providing technical guidance and support to FAO staff and Members. The SP teams (which implement the Strategic Framework) are responsible for mainstreaming gender into their work (please see the terms of reference for key activities under each SO).
33. FAO's performance against the GEP is monitored using one of the two key performance indicators associated with Outcome 6.3 (the outcome dedicated to the cross-cutting theme of gender under SO 6). This indicator is regularly reported to the Governing Bodies as part of corporate reports (Mid-Term Reviews and Programme Implementation Reports). Gender-related achievements are also regularly reported in the same reports using specific gender-sensitive indicators and qualifiers integrated into the monitoring framework of each SP.

Implementation arrangements

34. At headquarters level, every SP team is supported by one or more experts from the Gender Team in ESP in the planning, implementation and reporting of gender-related work in the SP's specific technical areas. Every technical division has a GFP who allocates 20 percent of her/his time to mainstreaming gender in the daily work of their division. GFPs are often supported by an alternate.
35. At the regional level, a Regional Gender Officer provides support and technical guidance to country and sub-regional offices and is responsible for coordinating and overseeing gender work in their regions.
36. At country level, country offices rely on GFPs who assign 20 percent of their time to mainstreaming gender in country programming.

Delivery mechanisms

37. FAO's work on gender is delivered through three corporate mechanisms:
 - Regional Initiatives,
 - CPFs and
 - Global programmes and knowledge products.
38. With technical backstopping provided by the Gender Team in ESP and the Regional Gender Officers and GFPs at regional and country levels, FAO undertook a series of stocktaking exercises to build understanding, approaches and capacity for gender mainstreaming, and to identify gaps and capacity needs in regional and country offices, global programmes and technical divisions.
39. Regional gender strategies have been formulated RAP, REU and RNE to respond to regional priorities and the specific contexts in which gender inequalities manifest themselves in various forms.
40. CGAs have been conducted in several countries in all regions. A total of 54 detailed CGAs have been produced (eight in RAP, 32 in RAF, five in RLC, four in RNE and five in REU). The production of CGAs serves three main purposes:
 1. To provide a baseline on the gender inequalities manifest in the agricultural and rural development sectors;

2. To inform the gender content of FAO's country programming; and
 3. To orientate work in the country towards reducing gender inequalities.
41. In RAF, gender assessments were undertaken in the context of cooperation with regional and sub-regional entities, such as the African Union Commission, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).
 42. At regional and country level, FAO has undertaken several policy and community initiatives to promote gender equality. A non-exhaustive list of these programmes is available in Annex 2.
 43. In addition to specific programmes, FAO has also developed guidance materials, promoted the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data, embarked on advocacy and policy dialogue with partners and assisted with capacity development, both within FAO and among its counterparts.

Resources

44. Gender mainstreaming is a ring-fenced area of work, receiving a predictable level of regular budget resources. For the 2016–2017 and 2018–2019 biennia, gender-related allocations under FAO's regular budget remained unchanged, at USD 21.8 million, corresponding to 2.16 percent of FAO's total regular budget.

3 Assessment of FAO's contribution: Summary of findings

3.1 Evaluation question I. Relevance of FAO's GEP

45. To what extent has FAO effectively incorporated the key elements of the GEP (including implementation structure) into its programmes and projects?
46. This evaluation question assesses the validity and quality of GEP implementation and the extent to which the institutional setup was fit for purpose.
47. Relevance and operationalization of the GEP.

Finding 1. The GEP remains relevant to FAO's overall mandate and strategic goals. However, its operationalization was not articulated in detail, affecting the quality of implementation.

48. A dedicated review of the GEP was carried out to assess the Policy's relevance to FAO's mandate amid recent institutional changes, namely, the revision of the Strategic Framework and FAO's continuing decentralization efforts. The Evaluation Team reviewed key elements of the GEP, including its goals, rationale, theory of change (including intended results, how the change occurs and underlying assumptions), strategy for realizing its objectives, implementation responsibilities and accountability structure.
49. The Evaluation Team found that the GEP's goal is still relevant to the Organization's mandate and that the Policy remains a valid guiding document for FAO's gender work. However, the first four objectives are easier to link to FAO's areas of work than the fifth (the share of agricultural aid committed to gender equality and women's empowerment), which lies outside FAO's remit and sphere of influence.
50. The Evaluation Team identified some important gaps in the operationalization of the GEP, in particular, the absence of intermediate outcomes that could be directly linked to FAO's work instruments such as a roadmap or action plan for communicating the modalities for operationalizing the Policy ("the how") at global, regional and country level²⁰. These gaps hampered staff understanding of what results were expected, why and how they would be achieved, and what assumptions were behind in the Policy's implementation logic. These gaps made intervention planning, monitoring and accountability arrangements challenging, especially as gender is a cross-cutting theme in the Reviewed Strategic Framework.

²⁰ Partner organizations (WFP, IFAD) have developed detailed action plans for achieving their gender policy objectives, with clear results frameworks, targets and indicators.

Box 2: Benchmarking study of the Rome-based agencies

The Evaluation Team carried out a benchmarking study of the Rome-based agencies – WFP and IFAD – and two specialized agencies – WHO and UNESCO – for learning purpose (please see the full analysis in Annex 3). The exercise provided several interesting comparisons.

The three Rome-based agencies use different delivery models and take different approaches to gender equality and women's empowerment. With a large proportion of its portfolio centred on humanitarian assistance interventions, WFP follows a direct-implementation approach for most of its programmes and places great emphasis on strengthening gender responsiveness in its country offices and non-government implementing partners. IFAD, as a development finance institution, does not implement programmes directly. Rather, it uses well-specified project design and approval criteria to promote gender-responsive and transformative approaches in programmes and implementing partner institutions. IFAD also makes specific allocations to awareness-raising and capacity-development activities in all of its projects and sets a quota for women beneficiaries in negotiations with national governments.

Both IFAD and WFP have accorded high importance to gender equality in their strategic frameworks. IFAD's policy was translated into an Implementation Plan (2011–2015), with five action areas and 13 results indicators covering IFAD loans and grants, advocacy, capacity development of implementing partners, gender and diversity balance within IFAD, and resources, monitoring and professional accountability. WFP's gender-equality programme is translated into action through a Gender Action Plan (GAP) with nine outcome areas and an Integrated Road Map for implementation. The GAP includes performance indicators linked to programme indicators (Country Results Frameworks) and processes and organizational changes associated with corporate-level indicators. It encompasses 15 minimum standards: 10 for gender mainstreaming and five for

3.1.1 Appropriateness of the institutional setup

Finding 2. FAO has taken significant steps to ensure an adequate institutional setup for gender mainstreaming. This includes the placement of Gender Officers in all Regional Offices, the strengthening of the GFP network, the formulation of regional strategies and the implementation of stocktaking exercises. This structure has served the purpose of promoting the implementation of the GEP, although some weaknesses at country level have limited its effectiveness.

51. At the corporate level, FAO undertook a series of stocktaking exercises to build understanding and approaches for gender mainstreaming in SPs and technical divisions. Gender stocktaking reports have been prepared by the Forestry, Fisheries, Land and Water, Climate Change and Livestock divisions. Similarly, analyses of the relevant gender gaps have been undertaken for all five SOs and the main entry points for gender work in each SO have been identified.
52. At regional level, FAO has developed regional strategies²¹ to support gender mainstreaming through the Regional Initiatives and in selected regional programmes and projects. Regional strategies in RAP, REU and RNE aim to guide gender mainstreaming in interventions and to operationalize the GEP taking into account

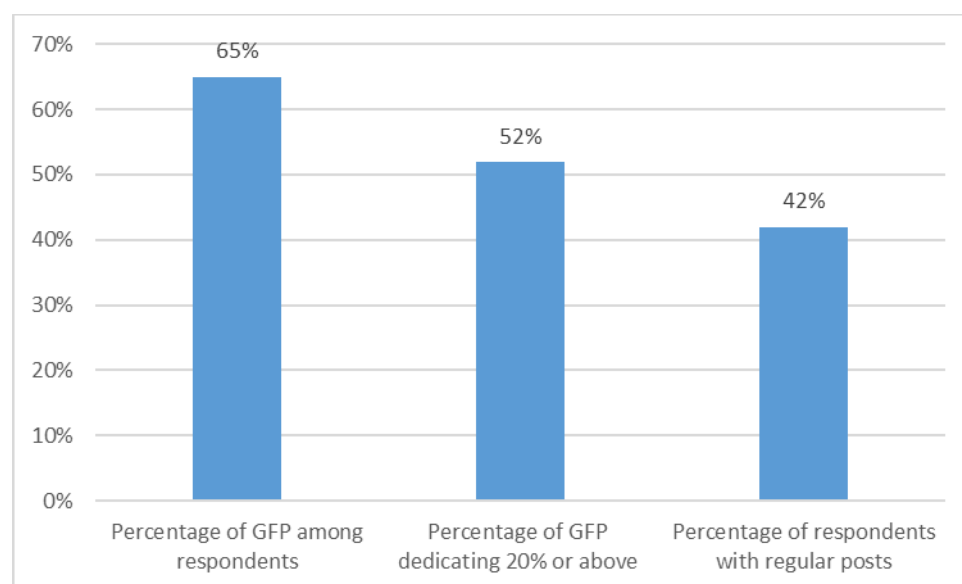
²¹ RNE and RAP finalized their strategies in 2017, REU in 2016.

region-specific contexts. RLC was compiling its strategy when the Evaluation Team visited the region and RAF has yet to finalize its regional strategy. The Evaluation Team noted the important work under way between RAF and regional and sub-regional organizations (such as the African Union Commission, ECOWAS and ECCAS), which has proven effective in advancing and promoting gender issues at the decision-making level in the region.

53. In RAP and RNE, the regional gender strategies reflected the thematic priorities of their respective regions and identified opportunities for gender integration in the Regional Initiatives agreed by their Regional Conferences. In REU, the regional gender strategy emphasized three minimum standards (MS7, MS8 and MS10), which require gender analysis in the formulation of all field programmes and projects, the integration of gender into all programme reviews and evaluations, and the specification of minimum competencies in gender analysis for all managers and professional staff to be deemed compliant.
54. The usefulness of the regional strategies as guiding documents at the regional and country levels was variable. Two strategies (RAP and RNE) reflected regional priorities and identified opportunities for gender mainstreaming in Regional Initiatives, though the RNE strategy did not tie in with the GEP and its objectives. The REU strategy emphasized only three minimum standards and did not link the GEP and its objectives to the Regional Initiatives. Furthermore, technical experts interviewed by the Evaluation Team stated that they were not always involved in the formulation of these strategies and could not, therefore, articulate their needs and priorities.
55. The Evaluation Team noted that some technical experts understood gender as "targeting women", indicating inadequate awareness of the GEP, which aims to introduce a shift in the focus of interventions from "women" to "gender". Due to the lack of clear and common understanding, teams often face challenges in mainstreaming gender in the planning and monitoring of and accountability arrangements for interventions.
56. At country level, the Evaluation Team found that although the GFP structure overall was appreciated by country offices, as it highlighted the relevance of gender to the Organization's mandate, its effectiveness in supporting the delivery of gender-related work at country level had been variable. For example, in RLC the network of GFPs serves as an important channel for knowledge sharing and learning. FAO staff and national stakeholders consider the GFP to be a positive element in FAO's gender structure. It helps to keep gender-related issues on the agenda, but the high turnover of professionals (due to job instability) has affected the retention of gender capacity.
57. The Evaluation Team found that many factors influenced the quality of support provided by the GFPs, including high turnover, technical background and experience, interest in the topic and time available to dedicate to the function. In some countries (such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan and Paraguay), the GFP is a full-time gender expert with substantial experience and well versed on national gender issues. In those cases, the GFP is able to provide adequate support to the country office and actively participate in the work of the Country Gender Thematic Group. In other countries, the GFPs either had no relevant experience of gender work, showed no interest in carrying out the role of focal point, were too busy with other, more urgent issues, or were appointed without necessarily receiving prior consultation.

58. The findings from the survey of GFPs (which had a response rate of 65 percent) confirmed that the above factors influenced the quality of the support. The survey showed that only 52 percent of GFPs managed to dedicate 20 percent (or more) of their time to gender-related activities. Ten percent of respondents were no longer GFPs by the time they received the survey. Only 42 percent of the respondents had regular posts; the remainder were either consultants or project staff. Figure 2 summarizes the key results of the GFP survey.

Figure 2: Key results of the GFP survey



Source: Survey

conducted by the evaluation team

59. The Evaluation Team found that when the GFP was someone with decision-making power, the office was more likely to mainstream gender in a systematic manner. Of the 62 survey respondents, 11 percent were FAORs and Assistant FAORs, who are the main decision-makers at country level. Eighty-three percent of the FAOR/AFAOR respondents reported that gender was mainstreamed in the majority of their office's activities, which was higher than the overall result of 62 percent for all GFPs.

3.1.2 Minimum standards

Finding 3. The minimum standards have been largely implemented, but given the time that has passed since they were established, some may need to be updated or even reformulated to better represent the realities of the external context today and the situation in the field.

60. The Evaluation Team found variations in implementation of the minimum standards at different levels of the Organization. At the corporate level, there was a high level of understanding and awareness of the normative dimension of these standards among different divisions, particularly in relation to those standards associated with data generation, analysis and use (such as MS 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8). However, more effort is needed to ensure effective implementation of the minimum standards related to capacity building and gender mainstreaming in human and financial resources. Feedback from interviews at headquarters and in the decentralized offices showed that gender considerations were not taken into account in FAO's staff performance assessments (except for the GFPs), as indicated in MS 12.

61. The Evaluation Team found less uptake of the minimum standards at decentralized level. For instance, most of the country offices visited by the Evaluation Team were not sufficiently utilising the knowledge and data produced at corporate level. This was due to many factors, including inadequate dissemination, limited translation to national languages and a lack of support for adapting these products into practical tools for technical staff in the field. The Evaluation Team noted that field staff had limited awareness of some of the main databases hosted by FAO at headquarters, such as FAOSTAT, AQUASTAT and the Gender and Land Rights Database.
62. Furthermore, the policy review conducted as part of this evaluation identified seven minimum standards (1, 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, 15) that need to be revised to meet the requirements of the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP 2.0)²² Performance Indicators. The suggested revisions/additions to each minimum standard, along with the rationale behind the proposed modifications, are outlined in the policy review (attached as an appendix to this document).

3.1.3 Knowledge products

Finding 4. FAO has developed numerous technical guidelines and awareness-raising materials, though their actual use is still limited.

63. To help the SP teams, technical units and Regional and country offices mainstream gender into their work, FAO has created a number of knowledge products and guidance materials. Several knowledge products and capacity-development materials and tools were developed and promoted to support the integration of gender issues in key areas related to FAO's mandate. Examples include: a framework on gender-sensitive value chains, with a specific focus on social sustainability; a training guide and module on gender-sensitive climate-smart agriculture, collating tried and tested good practices and innovative approaches – designed together with CGIAR and the World Bank – and on resilience and humanitarian responses; specific guidance materials on gender-responsive disaster risk reduction; and materials on gender-based violence prevention and mitigation.
64. The Evaluation Team found limited use and uptake of this knowledge material by staff and national counterparts at the decentralized level. In most of the countries visited, the Evaluation Team noted that these knowledge products and tools were not used by technical officers in their day-to-day work and even less so by their counterparts at the country level.
65. The FAO regional and country staff met by the Evaluation Team were either not aware of the existence of these products, or did not think them adequate for their purposes. Staff viewed the products as theoretical and often not applicable to the actual contexts in which they operated. Some FAO staff cited guidance material from donors, such as the gender policy and guidelines from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the European Union (EU) and the Global Environment Fund (GEF), as being more appropriate to their specific situations, as they, at least, had the advantage of satisfying donor requirements. Exceptions to this finding were the major flagship publications, such as *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*

²² Since 2013, FAO has reported on UN-SWAP on an annual basis. UN-SWAP 2.0 was introduced in October 2018.

(SOFI) and the SOFA report, which were generally known by FAO technical staff and development partners in the respective regions.

3.1.4 Capacity development

Finding 5. FAO's efforts to strengthen and build staff capacity in the decentralized Offices were acknowledged. However, greater systematic efforts are needed to strengthen capacity development (an individual, institutional and enabling environment) in gender mainstreaming, so that it is relevant and applies to the daily work and needs of staff.

66. FAO's gender network consists of more than 200 staff across the Organization. FAO has made important efforts to strengthen the capacities of the gender technical network²³ since its reactivation in 2012.
67. This is particularly relevant due to the varying capacities of the GFPs. While some GFPs are gender experts, the majority are technical officers with limited or no previous experience of working on gender issues. Their capacities have been reinforced by direct technical support from gender experts at headquarters and the regions, as well as a series of webinars and seminars to prepare them for their role. Since the introduction of the GEP, every Regional Office has organized at least one regional training workshop for its GFPs to provide them with the knowledge and tools they need for gender mainstreaming, so they can execute their role effectively. The Evaluation Team found that these training sessions and workshops were highly appreciated by the staff who attended them. However, the relatively high turnover of GFPs poses a real challenge in terms of training efficacy, suggesting that FAO should organize training sessions more frequently and regularly.
68. FAO has also helped to build the capacity of technical officers and their national counterparts in all five regions to increase awareness and understanding of gender issues in their respective thematic areas. For example, RAF has conducted extensive training on gender mainstreaming in regional and national agricultural investment plans as part of the ongoing development of the second generation of such plans in the region (highly valued by ECOWAS). In the RNE region, the Gender Officer, in collaboration with the University of Cordoba, recently conducted a training session in Spain for government officials from Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia working in the water sector. It focused on gender analysis, and gender and value chains, as well as on the application of related methodologies developed by FAO, such as "Multiple uses of water services in large irrigation systems" and the "Gender and value-chain approach".
69. Although training has taken place, its frequency and targeting need something of a rethink. Benchmarked agencies, for example, undertake regular capacity assessments (WFP, for instance, completes an assessment once every three years) and have made gender-related training compulsory for staff, particularly for senior management.

Capacity building in statistics

²³ The 36th Session of the FAO Conference in 2009 stated that "senior gender focal points have been appointed in all divisions in conformity with the [independent external evaluation] recommendations. Meetings are held regularly and training is being provided to all gender focal points on gender analysis and specific technical issues as needed."

70. FAO hosts some important databases that contain sex-disaggregated data (for example, FAOSTAT, AQUASTAT and the Gender and Land Rights Database). However, these databases are not well known by some FAO professionals and their external counterparts. The same applies to methodologies for collecting gender and women-specific data developed by FAO or with FAO's support, such as the Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W), which, although relevant, were not well communicated.
71. FAO is custodian of 21 indicators under six of the SDGs, including two gender indicators under SDG5 (5.a.1²⁴ on women's ownership of agricultural land and 5.a.2²⁵ on women's equal rights to land ownership). FAO's custodianship role involves strengthening the statistical capacity of national governments, so that they can meet their SDG reporting requirements.
72. FAO is also custodian of indicator 2.1.2 on the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES). At the global level, considerable effort is being made to provide sex-disaggregated data. However, FAO has yet to fully determine whether it is possible to disaggregate national data by sex, as some countries do not conduct gender-disaggregated analysis.
73. Therefore, under the leadership of the Office of Chief Statistician (OCS), FAO has organized regional workshops in RAP, REU and RLC to raise awareness and build national counterparts' capacity on the relevance of and methodological approach to collecting and disseminating sex-disaggregated data for SDG reporting purposes. FAO has assisted with capacity development in more than 22 countries on the methodology for collecting data and reporting under SDG Target 5.a (undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws).
74. In REU, FAO has worked to build the capacity of national statistics offices to collect gender-sensitive data – including the development of an Agri-Gender Statistics Toolkit²⁶ in English, Russian and Turkish – and to analyse and use gender statistics. This should assist governments with evidence-based and informed policy-making processes and in reporting on their progress with regard to the SDGs. Staff at the Kyrgyz National Statistics Committee, for example, gave very positive feedback on the technical assistance they had received from FAO headquarters and regional staff on methodologies. In RAP, as part of the UN Thematic Working Group on Gender Statistics, FAO is contributing to the capacity development curriculum of the Asia Pacific Subgroup on Gender Statistics of the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific.
75. RNE has conducted an assessment of gender mainstreaming in the production and use of statistics on agriculture and rural development in eight Members: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, the Sudan and Tunisia. In 2017, a regional synthesis report aggregated the findings of the national assessment with lessons learned from the development of gender statistics in other regions and proposed a regional action

²⁴ (a) The percentage of people with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land (out of the total agricultural population) by sex and (b) the share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure.

²⁵ Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control.

²⁶ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5769e.pdf>

plan to strengthen the production and use of gender statistics through regional capacity building.

Advocacy and policy dialogue – CEDAW Article 14

76. FAO is a convener, supporting the integration of gender-equality dimensions into national and international policy processes related to food security and nutrition. The endorsement of CEDAW Article 14, Recommendation 34 in 2016 (an initiative orchestrated by FAO, WFP, IFAD and UN Women) was a key result, providing an important entry point for advocacy in national policy dialogue. Based on this, FAO is providing technical assistance on implementing CEDAW Article 14, Recommendation 34 in Botswana, Guatemala, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and Tanzania and is supporting several countries globally in their yearly CEDAW reporting on Article 14.

3.1.5 Data generation at country level

Finding 6. FAO has produced a substantial number of CGAs in all regions, however, the quality of the assessments and their use varies greatly.

77. As mentioned, 54 CGAs had been produced at the time of this evaluation. The Evaluation Team found that, in some countries, CGAs had been used as a source of data for planning. In all REU countries visited by the Evaluation Team, the value of the CGAs was cited by staff. The CGAs were also referenced in project documents. The REU and RNE Gender Officers consider gender assessments to be important for country-level staff and counterparts, given the lack of baseline gender-related information on the sectors within FAO's remit. The relevance of the CGAs was also highlighted by FAO counterparts the Evaluation Team met in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey.
78. The starting point for preparing a CGA in REU was a review of the core set of gender indicators pertaining to agriculture and rural areas developed by REU to standardize data collection and comparison in the region. As part of the study, discussions were held on existing indicators and data sources that could be used to generate gender statistics, as well as critical data gaps relevant to gender and agriculture.
79. REU is more of an exception in terms of its use of the CGAs. The Evaluation Team found that in most other regions, the formulation of CGAs is still mainly a theoretical exercise led by the Regional Office (with the support of consultants) and not necessarily internalized by the country offices.
80. These findings also echo OED's observations in its recent review of the application of CPFs,²⁷ which found that gender mainstreaming in country programming is still inadequate and that the uptake of CGA results in CPF documents is unsatisfactory. That said, the Evaluation Team found that the new generation of CPFs showed considerable improvements in mainstreaming gender,²⁸ most notably in countries including Algeria,

²⁷ <http://www.fao.org/3/I9472EN/i9472en.pdf>

²⁸ For example, the Nepal CPF 2013–2017 did not mention gender concerns and only had one output on increasing women's land ownership. In the new CPF 2018–2022, however, though it is beyond the scope of this evaluation, gender is mainstreamed throughout the document. The CPF has a separate outcome related to gender – Outcome 3 on inclusive and gender-responsive livelihood enhancement and poverty reduction – and there are gender-related outputs and targets under all three outcomes.

Cambodia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Georgia, Guatemala, Guyana, Nepal and the West Bank and Gaza.

3.1.6 Reporting

81. Feedback from FAO personnel at regional and country levels indicates that reporting on gender is particularly challenging due to the limitations of FAO's systems, especially the Programme Planning, Implementation Reporting and Evaluation Support System (PIRES) and Programme Implementation Report (PIR). The allocated space for reporting results on each SO is very limited, so the content needs to be strategic. Hence, as most corporate outcomes, outputs and indicators do not include gender, achievements on the topic are barely mentioned, as management teams opt to report on what is written in the framework.
82. This reporting issue hinders not only the monitoring of results, but also the planning process. As less emphasis is placed on gender at the reporting stage, there are fewer incentives to include it in the planning stage.

3.2 Evaluation question II. Effectiveness of FAO's work on gender

How has FAO's work on gender mainstreaming contributed to the achievement of equality in sustainable agricultural production and rural development for the elimination of hunger?

Finding 7. FAO has made considerable strides at policy and field level towards meeting its gender-equality objectives. Results vary from country to country, however, and require national ownership for uptake and sustainability.

83. Closing the gender gap requires comprehensive, joint efforts in all spheres of influence, from the political to the individual.²⁹ It also requires political commitment and "affirmative action".³⁰ Changing social norms and behaviour is also key to achieving gender equality and, here, policy can play a role.³¹
84. In evaluating FAO's contribution to gender equality, the focus will be on the GEP's first four objectives. The fifth, on increasing the percentage of agricultural aid committed to women/gender-equality related projects, is vague and does not really fall within FAO's remit or sphere of influence. Furthermore, as discussed above, it is practically impossible to monitor progress in this regard using FAO's current reporting systems.
85. Progress on the four objectives can be evaluated on two different, but related levels. The first is the enabling environment as it pertains to policy, strategy and planning, while the second relates to project achievement at the level of local community and beneficiaries. While this second level remains important, the first could be considered more important, as the scope of its impact is far greater than what FAO can achieve at community level in terms of coverage, be it by area or number of beneficiaries. Indeed, broad coverage at community level should not be expected, precisely because FAO is an organization with relatively meagre financial resources compared with other actors in the international development arena (for example, the World Bank, IFAD, the African Development Bank or bilateral donors).

²⁹ WEF (2017)

³⁰ Action to favour people and groups who tend to suffer from discrimination; situation of inequality

³¹ Overseas Development Institute (2015)

86. Though cost effectiveness is an important consideration in project design and implementation, FAO's significant contribution at community level is not measured by the number of beneficiaries or the scale of the area covered. FAO projects are generally more meaningfully evaluated in terms of their scalability and potential for replication by larger actors with greater resources, for example, improvements in crop varieties and livestock breeds; adaptation and improvement of technologies to boost crop and livestock production and productivity; and, significant for the purposes of this evaluation, gender mainstreaming and contribution to gender equality.
87. From a review of project documents, interviews and visits to project sites, it became evident that the boundaries between the GEP's four objectives were not rigid, particularly for projects on the ground. Projects rarely tie in with just one objective and it is normal to assign two or more objectives to any given project. GEP objective 2 (women and men have equal access to and control over decent employment and income, land and other productive resources) and GEP objective 4 (women's work burden is reduced by 20 percent through improved technologies, services and infrastructure) are often grouped together on the same project.
88. There is often an intersection between projects tied to GEP objective 3 (women and men have equal access to goods and services for agricultural development and to markets) and those linked to SO4 (enable inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems). SO4 seems to be largely associated with community projects, even when the projects are not designated as such. For example, RAF's Regional Initiative 2 was originally focused on SO2 (make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable), but has expanded to encompass SO3 (reduce rural poverty) and SO4. We will, therefore, attempt to analyse the contribution at project level to each GEP objective, bearing in mind the links and interdependencies. We cannot meaningfully assess the contribution of each GEP objective at policy/strategy level within the scope of this report, so will endeavour to present an overall assessment of all four objectives.

3.2.1 Contribution to GEP objectives at policy/strategy level

Finding 8. The most important results of FAO's work on gender are to be found at the policy and strategy levels. In some regions, where regional bodies are engaged in gender issues, FAO has advocated for and supported important initiatives, such as the inclusion of a gender strategy in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States' (CELAC) Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication 2025 and gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

89. One of FAO's generally recognized comparative advantages at global, regional and sub-regional level is its convening power and capacity, which it often uses to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. At the global level, it underlines FAO's advocacy for the operationalization of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT). These guidelines seek to promote the land rights of women farmers, among others, who face serious gender discrimination in all regions. As the traditional land-tenure systems of FAO Members generally do not recognize women's titles to land, FAO has also piloted VGGT-related interventions in various regions to promote the tenure rights of marginalized groups, particularly women farmers and pastoralists. Details of this support at country level are illustrated in Table 3.

90. In addition, FAO launched “Governing land for women and men”, a capacity-development programme to support countries in implementing the VGGT’s gender-equality principle. To date, Liberia, Mongolia, Sierra Leone and South Africa have participated in the programme and developed action plans for providing gender-equitable governance of land tenure.
91. At the regional level, four Regional Offices have worked with regional and sub-regional entities. The fifth, RNE, is working at policy and strategy level, mostly with individual countries. This limited focus may partly be ascribed to the limited involvement of equivalent regional entities (such as the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), an affiliate of the League of Arab States)³² on gender issues. FAO’s advocacy and support at policy and strategy levels in the regions have made a substantial contribution to enhanced political commitment on gender issues in agriculture and the empowerment of women farmers. Its policy and strategy interventions are impressively numerous at regional and national level.

Table 3: Examples of FAO’s VGGT interventions

Country	Projects	Relevant activities
Mongolia	FMM/GCP/111/MUL GCP/GLO/501/GER GCP/GLO/347/GER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of key instruments of tenure (draft pastoral law and existing forestry law) Consultations with stakeholders on the two assessments
Senegal	FMM/GCP/111/MUL GCP/GLO/599/GER GCP/GLO/347/MUL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribution to the revision of the land tenure policy Pilot projects on implementation of the tenure reform
Sierra Leone	FMM/GCP/111/MUL GCP/GLO/347/GER GCP /GLO/501/GER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-sectoral interventions through five project components: legal framework, land administration and responsible commercial investment, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry and right to food Development of and training on a customized version of SOLA software for capturing cadastral data of MLCPE and online sharing with the agency responsible for registration of land transactions (OARG)
Uganda	GCP/GLO/347/UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot project on formalizing tenure on customary lands, development of land tenure capture software based on Open Tenure and training on this software Pilot project on formalizing tenure on customary lands, development of land tenure capture software based on Open Tenure and training on this software

92. The greatest achievements in the RLC region have been at the policy and strategy level. In 2016, CELAC approved the inclusion of a gender strategy in its Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication 2025. In addition to advocating for its approval, FAO provided technical support to the CELAC Women’s Advancement Group and supported

³² RNE has collaborated with AOAD for decades, particularly in connection with agricultural statistics. In 2017, RNE and AOAD signed an agreement to work towards achievement of the SDGs.

the validation and implementation of the strategy at national level in four countries.³³ Similarly, through its alliance with the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino), FAO contributed to the design of three model laws on family farming, small-scale fisheries and school feeding. Gender equality has been integrated into all three laws, though it is more prominent in the first two, due to the variances in gender roles in agriculture and fisheries.

93. RLC has also encouraged regional forums to discuss and promote gender equality and women's rights. In 2018, for example, it promoted the High-Level Forum for the Empowerment of Indigenous Women to Eradicate Hunger and Malnutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean.³⁴ In 2017, together with UN Women and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Paraguay, RLC organized the International Conference on the Equal Governance of Lands³⁵ to discuss women's access to land and productive resources to enhance economic autonomy, equal rights and food security in the region.³⁶ These types of event promote experience sharing and learning among policymakers and are appreciated by the governments involved.
94. In REU, the Vilnius Declaration (2017) is an important regional commitment to gender equality, which arose from work by FAO. REU is part of the Regional United Nations Development Group (UNDG) coordination mechanism, unique to Europe, and the REU Gender Team participates in the regional Issue-Based Coalition on Gender Equality, which coordinates work and supports country offices in mainstreaming action and provides policy support for SDG implementation.
95. In RAF, one multi-country programme (FMM/GLO/122/MUL) has, among its objectives, a contribution to agriculture-sector and rural poverty-reduction policies and programmes through the inclusion of gender-related strategic priorities. The programme also contributes to the promotion of gender mainstreaming in the implementation of CAADP. In several countries, including the Gambia, Ghana and Kenya, RAF country offices are providing support to National Agriculture Investment Plans (NAIPs), strengthening their gender component. In Kenya, the country office is leading training in gender integration in the National Adaptation Plan, including an introduction to the methodological framework for addressing gender dimensions in inclusive natural resource governance (UNFA/GLO/616/UND).
96. Work at the regional level directly supports country-office interventions, which provide primary support to Members. Integral to the work of country offices is technical support for counterpart ministries and departments in compiling and gender-mainstreaming their respective policies, strategies and plans. Such country support can be found in all regions, though instances of support are far more numerous in RAF and RLC than in REU. In REU, more interventions could be launched, capitalizing, as an entry point, on the EU gender equality and human rights requirements for countries intending to export

³³ The Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti and Paraguay. The degree of success of this support very much depended on country context. In the Dominican Republic, a recently approved law served as an entry point and implementation was smooth. In Paraguay, where the political environment is less conducive, RLC is still testing a possible entry point.

³⁴ FAO (2018) *Foro de alto nivel – Empoderar a las mujeres indígenas para erradicar el hambre y la malnutrición en América Latina y el Caribe* (<http://www.fao.org/americas/eventos/ver/es/c/1037043/>)

³⁵ <http://www.fao.org/americas/eventos/ver/pt/c/1026471/>

³⁶ It counted on the participation of representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

agricultural products to the EU, as well as those attempting to accede to the EU (for example, Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia).

97. The Paraguay country office is recognized for its assistance to indigenous women. It is currently supporting the National Plan on Indigenous Peoples, in which a chapter is devoted to indigenous women, and pushing at political level for the formulation of a law giving equal rights to indigenous women. In 2015, the Paraguayan parliament approved the Public Policy Law for Rural Women; RLC played a leading role in its formulation and approval by providing technical assistance and advocating for its relevance and uptake. Since 2016, the country office has actively promoted the regulation, dissemination and implementation of the law. In Guatemala, the Institutional Policy for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food and its Strategic Implementation Framework for 2014–2023 were formulated and approved as part of RLC's support for CEDAW. RLC provided sound technical advice and undertook extensive advocacy work, promoting the creation of an inter-sectoral working group on rural development, with a special focus on rural and indigenous women. At national level, both Paraguay and Guatemala can present remarkable examples of successful advocacy and interventions in the policy and strategy sphere.
98. Honduras is another keen example of a country in which FAO has provided political support for gender mainstreaming. The key strategic pillars of the National Strategy on Family Farming included the promotion of better market access for women, as well as capacity-development activities for women in technical areas. In the Dominican Republic, the country office has undertaken a series of capacity-development activities for the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment in partnership with UN Women. The goal is to strengthen governmental capacity for gender mainstreaming as a way of promoting gender-responsive policies and programmes.
99. REU is working to support more gender-sensitive policy development at national level. In Georgia, a sub-project funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation and the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD) (GCP/GEO/004/AUT) made contributions to Georgia's 2015–2020 Agricultural Strategy Action Plan, including the incorporation of gender-disaggregated indicators into its monitoring and evaluation systems. FAO, in partnership with UN Women, has also contributed to mainstreaming gender in Georgia's Internally Displaced People (IDP) Strategy and Action Plan, Communication Strategy and IDP Livelihood Action Plan of the Ministry of Internally Displaced People, under GCP/GEO/007/EC. In addition, REU has supported the development of the Georgian National Action Plan for Gender Equality. National advisers said they took information and proposals from FAO into account. ENPARD has also made strong contributions to other strategies and policies, however, these did not appear to include gender aspects. When ENPARD was working on Georgia's Strategy for Agricultural Development 2015–2020, there was a great deal of lobbying from international partners about what to include. Many things were incorporated (including gender) and commitments were made, but the strategy was underfunded by government and was not considered a priority.
100. REU has worked with many countries on their SDGs, helping to nationalize indicators, including gender-linked indicators, supporting policy- and strategy-making at national level. Kyrgyzstan's trial of the "Gender in agricultural policies analysis" (GAPo) tool is directly aimed at improving the gender sensitivity of national legislation and policies. However, the action plan was still under development at the time of writing, so it is not

yet possible to say what contribution it will make. FAO is also commenting on CEDAW, particularly in relation to Article 14.

101. In RAP, FAO has made major technical contributions to policy and strategy development in many countries under the framework of its collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and other UN agencies. In Nepal, FAO supported the formulation of the country's Agriculture Development Strategy 2015–2035, developed by a consortium of donor organizations and financial institutions. In particular, FAO contributed to activities under the "improved food and nutrition security of most disadvantaged groups" objective of the Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FANUSEP) and the Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan. The Evaluation Team received positive feedback from government departments and partner organizations on FAO's role. FAO also lent support in the formulation of the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Bill, which was approved by parliament on 18 September 2018.
102. In the Philippines, FAO has provided support to the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) joint initiative by the UN Statistics Division and UN Women to promote the availability of internationally comparable sex-disaggregated data on asset ownership and entrepreneurship. The project assists governments in enhancing national policies that promote women's empowerment and decision making, sustainable livelihoods and the reduction of vulnerability through evidence-based policy development.
103. In Sri Lanka, FAO is supporting the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources Management and the Ministry of Agriculture in the development of new agricultural and irrigation policies and discussing ways to promote better understanding of gender issues in the agriculture sector as a basis for evidence-based policymaking and programme design and implementation. In cooperation with the EU, a gender training workshop for policymakers involved in the development of sector policy was held in 2018.
104. FAO is ensuring gender mainstreaming in the Bangladesh Country Investment Plan for the environment, forestry and climate change sectors and is helping to build capacity at the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and its agencies for gender-sensitive policy and programme development.

3.2.2 Contribution to gender-equality objectives at community level

Finding 9. Some of FAO's interventions have successfully contributed to closing some gender gaps at community level, mainly through the economic empowerment of women. However, these cases remain limited in number and scope. Moreover, the contribution of these results to the Organization's high-level gender-equality objectives cannot be directly linked.

105. In compliance with the GEP, all CPFs in FAO country offices underline national commitment to mainstreaming the cross-cutting issues of gender, nutrition and climate change in all projects and activities. Project documents confirm the same commitment and recognize that gender refers to the roles of both men and women and that gender equality is to transcend disparities and inequities. However, it is rare to find explicit reference in these documents to their alignment with the GEP and its objectives, although CPFs and project documents do stress alignment with the Strategic Framework, government policies and priorities, and the United Nations Development

Assistance Framework (UNDAF) country document. Often, there is no elaboration on what is meant by gender mainstreaming and how it is to be pursued.

106. In pointing out the lack of reference to the GEP, the intention is not to be pedantic, as it could plausibly be assumed that alignment with the Reviewed Strategic Framework inherently incorporates reference to the Organization's GEP, as the Strategic Framework accords gender the status of a cross-cutting theme. However, the lack of explicit reference to the GEP could denote reluctance, lack of commitment or inadequate capacity to contextualize and operationalize the highly abstract provisions in both the GEP and the Reviewed Strategic Framework.
107. The GEP and Strategic Framework can be contextualized through clear understanding of these issues, based on diligent social-baseline and gender analysis. However, in the countries visited by the Evaluation Team, and from a review of sampled projects, the planning of most projects addressing community needs had not benefitted from systematic gender analysis and rarely involved social-baseline assessments. The few exceptions were the relatively large projects that reviewed and backstopped by the regional Gender Officer, a GFP with the requisite capacity, or a gender expert recruited to undertake the tasks and, more often than not, were down to resource-partner requirements.
108. Another factor influencing FAO's attitude to gender are its resource partners' policies. The Evaluation Team read project documents, such as the SIDA-funded project on water management and governance in the Near East and North Africa (NENA), entitled "Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Water Efficiency/Productivity and Water Sustainability in NENA Countries", and the "Support to fishery and aquaculture management in the Kyrgyz Republic" project,³⁷ where the influence of Sweden and Finland in promoting gender was clear. Some donors insist on gender mainstreaming and an external push is often useful in overcoming inertia. For example, in FAO's work with IDPs in Ukraine, Canada had begun to comment that the Organization's proposals weren't sufficiently gender sensitive, prompting positive change. GEF and Green Climate Fund (GCF) applications have also spurred gender-related work, for example, on forthcoming GCF projects in Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan and Nepal, preparations for which have included gender analysis and the inclusion of gender-linked activities. These projects will require more active gender support than usual.
109. However, the general trend in FAO projects, particularly in small TCPs, which constitute the overwhelming majority of interventions, is that the adopted outcomes, outputs and activities in project documents purporting to address gender invariably relate to women-specific components or to the inclusion of women as participants in project activities. Such targeting does not seem to recognize that "women" are not a homogeneous group, but need to be differentiated by characteristics such as ethnic group, command of economic resources, age, marital status and level of education. It could actually be harmful to reinforce the stereotype of women as a vulnerable group and alienate men from making much-needed contributions to achieving gender equality. Unless rigorous analysis is carried out at the planning stage, a lack of diligently prepared criteria for beneficiary selection may compromise project objectives – assuming that projects are not specifically designed for the better-off women in a community, for example, by stipulating contributions that poorer women cannot afford.

³⁷ GCP/KYR/012/FIN: Towards sustainable aquaculture and fisheries development in the Kyrgyz Republic.

110. Such misunderstanding seems to be reinforced by the tendency of FAO corporate and project documents to conceive men and women not only as separate and independent individuals, but also as competitors for scarce resources, or to assume homogeneous interests and equal distribution of benefits within households. To this extent, the conception of what constitutes gender equality appears to differ from that adopted by government institutions.
111. Governments are aware of gender inequality, however, they tend to address it from a household perspective, rather than through individualized lenses that distinguish between women and men. Through this household perspective, men and women are deemed bound by intricate, socio-culturally defined intra-household roles and complementary relationships (expressed by division of labour along sex and age lines). This perspective also assumes that men and women jointly seek to devise and pursue survival strategies for the wellbeing of all household members, often in a context of general hardship. For example, much of the gender discourse in the REU region is about women in the family and REU documents tend to explain this as a consequence of the rise of more conservative religious cultures in the region (especially Central Asia). Even so, some REU projects have carried out a diligent gender analysis, understanding of context, and prudent identification of feasible entry points.
112. Implementing projects without systematic gender analysis may still achieve results, particularly when it comes to the economic empowerment of women. However, these results are often more by accident than design. In some cases, FAO was able to draw important lessons from these achievements, which triggered interest and raised the awareness of Technical Officers involved in project implementation.
113. Below are some examples of contributions at community level assessed by the Evaluation Team. These are presented by GEP objective to facilitate discussion on their relevance and effectiveness.

GEP objective 1. Women participate equally with men as decision-makers in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies and programmes.

114. In interventions involving the promotion of rural institutions, in general, FAO projects either allocate a certain percentage for the representation of women (typically 30 percent) or opt for the formation of separate women's groups. In mixed groups, this commitment is usually met and women are assigned positions on committees. However, in the countries visited by the Evaluation Team (in the RAP and REU regions, in particular, and to lesser extent in the other regions), projects tended to form women-specific groups rather than mixed groups. Local culture and traditions are supposedly factors inhibiting the creation of mixed rural institutions. In RAP, the focus is generally justified based on customary norms regarding the exclusion of women in the public domain. In REU, the explanation is that in the post-Soviet period, state support for the emancipation of women has weakened amid growing conservatism in many countries. In both cases, the difficulty seems to be an inability to identify feasible entry points based on understanding of the local context and systematic gender analysis. In those REU initiatives that identified entry points, such as the "Conservation and development of dual-purpose cattle breeds in Eastern Europe" project implemented in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine, and the "Technical assistance to support the establishment of a National Animal Identification, Registration and Traceability System (NAITS)" project in Georgia, implementation seems to have progressed very well.

115. The interventions reviewed in the RAP region generally did not feature the promotion of decision-making by women in their design. But there are many examples of local women entrepreneurs in the region who have taken up leadership roles. For example, Farmer Field Schools have created women farmer leaders. Similarly, women who have benefitted from capacity development in livestock management and value-chain interventions have become local leaders in their communities. The Evaluation Team noted a similar, indirect impact on the empowerment of women in REU. Women's economic empowerment is vital, because when women are empowered, they are likely to become more active in their community and in politics. Women who have assets or businesses also find it easier to voice their needs and be active in politics.
116. In the REU region, empowerment seems to have been considered in a limited sense and only a few projects supported women's social or political empowerment. The latter are usually found in joint programmes with other UN organizations, particularly UN Women (for example, the work with IDPs in Georgia and in the Rural Women's Economic Empowerment Programme (RWEE) in Kyrgyzstan). REU has launched projects to promote women in cooperatives in Georgia and Central Asia, which are relevant to the achievement of women's empowerment for political and organizational work.
117. The RWEE programme in Kyrgyzstan is a positive example of a broader interpretation of empowerment in the REU region. The women participants reported economic and political empowerment within the community. They have become more active, lobbying the local self-governance office on various issues and even standing for election in some cases.
118. There were also cases in REU where projects had to undertake gender analysis well into the life of the project. In Turkey, the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Sustainable Land Management and Climate-Friendly Agriculture Project (GCP/TUR/055/GFF) noted that the project did not have sufficient commitment to women's empowerment, gender equality and human rights. There was no clear consideration of how the project would reduce gender inequities. Farmer Field Schools were the main activity expected to address gender. However, in practice, this received inadequate attention – the curricula for women and men were identical, women were not encouraged to attend and the scheduling of the sessions did not suit women due to household responsibilities. The recommendation was to recruit a gender consultant, which has been acted on by REU (though only on a short-term contract), to assess how the project can address women's livelihood and status.
119. Percentages for female representation are often not only a decision made by FAO projects, but also government policy. In Kenya, 30 percent representation is enshrined in the country's constitution. Likewise, in all local community meetings attended by the Evaluation Team during visits to project sites in Africa, Europe and Central Asia, there were more women than men in attendance. Women often make up the majority of beneficiaries. This is ascribed to the fact that many men have migrated and left their wives behind as heads of household.
120. FAO projects have made efforts to strengthen women's groups and build their capacity for management, for example, in the Gambia, where a numeracy initiative for women has helped them keep record of the fish baskets received from fishermen (TCP/GAM/3501 BABY02).
121. A senior officer in RAF noted that decision-making by women was not simply a matter of having a voice in an institution, but could take place indirectly with far-reaching

effects in male-only production domains. For instance, fishing in Ghana is a male domain, while processing and marketing is a female domain. As major buyers of caught fish, women can thus influence the supply side of the market; their preference for large fish has pressed the men to concentrate on capturing larger fish, including the use of wide fishing nets.

122. Furthermore, gender-sensitive decision-making is not solely achieved through gender balance in the composition of rural institutions and their management structures. Equally, if not more important, is the impact of the decision on gender roles, relations and needs. The gender-sensitivity of a decision, irrespective of whether taken by men or women, relates to whether or not it benefits (or harms) either of the two genders. Recognition of this level of impact (or outcome) of decision making was not evident to the Evaluation Team.

GEP objective 2. Women and men have equal access to and control over decent employment and income, land and other productive resources.

123. Numerous FAO projects relate to access and control over decent employment and productive resources while simultaneously targeting women. However, only in a few cases have these projects challenged, or sought to change, pre-existing gender roles. For example, in some countries in Africa, such as the Gambia and Malawi, women have traditionally constituted the majority of workers in small-scale agriculture. In some countries in Asia and the Pacific, the number of women in the sector has been growing due to what has been characterized as the “feminization” of agriculture. The number of women heads of rural households has also been found to be substantial in countries affected by crises resulting in influxes of refugees and IDPs (for instance, Myanmar and the Philippines). Crises affect both source and destination countries – a situation that is true of many countries in REU, as well as Syria and its neighbouring countries in RNE.
124. Numerous FAO projects seek to increase women’s access to decent employment and income in more sustainable ways. One interesting FAO project is in Georgia, where support was extended to single mothers with young children who could not look for work as they lacked childcare support at home, while kindergartens in the area were either non-existent or in poor condition. The project renovated nearly 50 kindergartens, focusing on villages with female-headed households and people with disabilities among the IDP populations. As a result, there are now more than 3 000 young children attending the kindergartens. This has allowed many women to seek jobs. The full impact of this ability to work outside the home was not monitored systematically or in any detail (for instance, how many of the women obtained jobs or whether incomes have increased). Nevertheless, the Evaluation Team met with women who highlighted the change this support had made in their lives. REU has also provided training for women’s groups on issues such as integrated pest management, the processing of agricultural produce, the use of new varieties of fruit and vegetables, and access to greenhouses and drip irrigation. There has been clear economic empowerment through the establishment of income-generating activities and businesses and increased access to finance through the establishment of revolving funds.
125. The most significant FAO projects are those aimed at innovation, empowerment and self-reliance. In these projects, women receive meaningful support in the form of productive assets, inputs, extension services and capacity building in organizational skills. As noted, FAO projects should not be evaluated only in terms of beneficiary numbers or the extent of coverage, but by their innovation and potential for uptake and

replication within beneficiary communities or their potential for expansion by other actors with greater resources, such as governments, the World Bank, IFAD or bilateral development partners.

126. In all regions, there are projects that have availed of innovative or improved technologies, such as water tanks for better irrigation, which have bolstered the capacity of beneficiaries. The provision of technology to avail of water for irrigation of vegetable gardens in the phased-out MDG1 Project in the Gambia was one such sustainable support. The Evaluation Team visited one site and found the women's group working enthusiastically on their farm without external support. The group's vegetable garden had a well that had been dug a long time ago by ActionAid to start the garden. However, the women had faced difficulties in carrying water to irrigate their individual plots and many members had neglected them. The intervention supported the women by providing inputs and installing a water pump, elevated poly tank and irrigation hose network. The beneficiaries reported that the project addressed their water problem in an effective and sustainable way, to the extent that they are now producing not only for household consumption, but also for sale.
127. FAO has undertaken several projects to support the direct and indirect economic empowerment of women and men. However, in some projects, the benefits for women in terms of accessing productive resources appear to be superficial and transient, for example, a few laying hens and some inputs, particularly chicken feed, which is considered a significant subsidy. As soon as project support ceases, chickens are either sold or eaten. The logic of such projects seems to be more of charity and not very different to emergency relief.
128. Some of the more successful projects in the REU region have contributed to the economic and social empowerment of women by improving their income-generating opportunities (for example, in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, strengthening women's handicraft production and improving their access to markets through the RWEE programme), as well as strengthening their position within the family and community.
129. In RLC, the main project focus is on economic empowerment and there are good examples in the region of projects that combine awareness raising and capacity development at community level to give voice and agency to women. The RWEE programme implemented in Guatemala is one of the region's flagship initiatives and accounts for RLC's achievements in closing the gender gap.³⁸
130. The Farmer Field Schools in RAP sought to test and validate climate-resilient technologies, distributing livestock breeds and some drought-tolerant varieties of rice, wheat, mustard, potato and forage crops to target beneficiaries. In one project in Nepal, the direct beneficiaries were 120 farmer groups (3 485 farmers), of which 74 percent were women. Discussions with project staff revealed that a greater number of women participated in the activities because the men had migrated out of the area and the women were managing the farms and livestock.
131. In Zimbabwe, through the Livelihood and Food Security Programme, RAF has a project that implements the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) methodology as a way of enhancing food and nutrition security, and reducing rural poverty. The project

³⁸ The RWEE programme aims to improve food and nutrition security, increase income and wealth, enhance leadership and participation in rural institutions, and shape laws, policies and programmes.

evaluation found the results to be positive, reflecting progress towards women's economic empowerment, including the creation of a village loan system. There are indications that these positive results can be attributed to the fact that the implementing partner is a gender adviser. In Niger, through the RWEE project, using the Dimitra Clubs approach, FAO has helped to give voice and agency to women and improve their position within the community.

132. Fisheries is one value chain in which women feature as key actors in processing and marketing, so it receives particular attention. Examples are projects in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and the Gambia, where RAF projects supported women through the introduction of innovative and improved technologies and production methods. Prior to the project's launch, women used to smoke fish on wire nets on the ground, a practice that lowers the quality of the processed fish and exposes women and children to burns and health hazards. The first intervention was simple, but effective: by introducing a wooden frame to the wire nets, fish were not mixed with soil and dirt and the incidence of hand burns was simultaneously reduced. The second development was the provision of a chorkor smoker, which reduced the level of smoke. Subsequently, the projects introduced the FAO-Thiaroye Processing Technique (FTT), a method of fish smoking and drying that reduces women's workload and the health hazards involved, in addition to cutting post-harvest losses, prolonging shelf life and adding value to the end product, boosting their incomes.
133. Success in the implementation of GALS in Zimbabwe and the introduction of FTT in the Gambia and Ghana underlines the apparent lack of systematic sharing of experience between Regional Offices. The Evaluation Team was informed that REU learned about the GALS methodology through IFAD, as its partner in the implementation of RWEE in Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan fisheries staff plan to use the GALS methodology in their fisheries and aquaculture project. In RAP, a number of projects seek to promote women in the fish value chain, but the FTT was apparently unknown to them.
134. However, the more significant projects on women's access to productive assets remain those promoting the rights of women in contexts where land ownership is socio-culturally vested in men. Interventions pertaining to land contribute to two international commitments taken on by FAO that go above and beyond its mandate as a UN organization. The first concerns advocacy for the operationalization of the VGGT, where FAO has a number of VGGT pilot projects (see Section 3.2 on the evaluation of FAO's contribution to policy and strategy). The second relates to work on SDG indicators 5.a.1 (a) on the percentage of people with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land (out of the total agricultural population) by sex and (b) the share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land by type of tenure, as well as 5.a.2 on the proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control. Several countries have been trained on the methodology for collecting data and reporting.
135. REU is mainstreaming issues related to women's land rights in country-level projects on land consolidation. In Azerbaijan, as part of project TCP/AZE/3601, during a national workshop on land consolidation, REU held an awareness-raising session on gender issues pertaining to access to and control over land. It also conducted a gender assessment in a pilot region and is now implementing a gender-responsive approach under the pilot intervention. A similar activity is planned in Macedonia as part of a land consolidation project (GCP/MCD/002/EC).

136. RAF has many projects promoting women's access to land and water for agricultural production, including in Burkina Faso, Chad, Kenya and Somalia. In western Chad, for example, one intervention facilitated 65 land-loan agreements between landowners and 650 of the economically weakest households, a majority of which were female-headed. RAF also has a forestry project in Cabo Verde, where gender mainstreaming seems to work very well and has been commended by the donor (the European Commission). As is to be expected, the project benefitted from a gender consultant. Boxes 3 and 4 provide further examples of gender mainstreaming at country level.

Box 3: Gender and environment – an example from Ghana

A technical intervention in Ghana, which gives women to access productive resources – shea trees – appears to be exceptional, in that it addresses gender and the environment not only as cross-cutting issues, but as its main preoccupation. The shea trees are wild, indigenous trees that mature in 15-20 years to produce quality nuts for 200 to 300 years. The Shea nuts are collected and processed for butter, which has a widening global market. Shea butter is a women-driven endeavour from production to processing and sale, providing a source of livelihood to more than 900 000 women in Northern Ghana. Climate change and tree cutting have combined to reduce parklands and accelerate environmental degradation, with a consequent decline in the density of shea trees. Nut collection has thereby become a tedious task, requiring women to cover longer distances for smaller quantities of nut.

FAO's country office entered into partnership with the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana to support a policy and system for enhancing the sustainable management of shea parklands. The aim of the partnership is to increase the density and yield of shea trees by planting fast-maturing (within 6 to 12 years) Shea seedlings. A pilot project was launched in agroforestry parklands in three communities, which also trained beneficiaries in sustainable parkland management and techniques. The success of the pilot is encouraging for replication and expansion by government and development partners, particularly those with policy concerns over environmental and gender issues. What is also striking about this project, which did not benefit from systematic gender analysis at its inception, was that it was initially conceived as a purely environmental intervention. Only as implementation commenced

Box 4: Gender and land rights – an example from Kenya

Kenya is one of the countries selected by FAO for the operationalization of the VGGT. The current programme follows and builds on the results of an earlier project and extends geographical coverage in the country's arid and semi-arid lands. Integral to the context of the intervention is the discrepancy in the status of tenure between the legal (government-imposed) and the legitimate (or customary status adopted by communities). The 2010 Constitution of Kenya recognizes the rights of women, even in the context of communal land, but putting this constitutional stipulation into effect is a challenge in the face of pre-existing community norms and practices, in which land is vested exclusively in men.

The methodology used in Kenya was particularly appreciated. It worked with both men and women, not only in dialogue with the authorities for participatory and transparent land planning, but also in an effort to change gender stereotypes by synchronizing the respective interests of men and women through support to the provision of a critical production resource: water. Women were interested in water to irrigate vegetable gardens (conservation agriculture), while men, who engaged in pastoral production, needed pasture. Through the provision of water to produce vegetables (for consumption as well as sale) and fodder (to cut and carry to the herds), the intervention demonstrated to communities the benefits of giving women access to land.

The Evaluation Team visited one of the project sites, in Nandi County, where community members (males and females alike) expressed their satisfaction with and appreciation of the intervention, which has had positive impacts on lives and livelihoods. The Kenya country office had another intervention in Nandi related to the processing of dairy products by women (pasteurization, management, conservation and marketing), which had become a viable income-generating activity. With the financial resources consequently available, women started to buy and own cattle, previously considered unthinkable, if not taboo.

The interventions in the arid and semi-arid lands seem significant, but they require more than the span of a single project to bear fruit. This requirement was aptly noted by the Kenya CPE, which accorded the project attention partly because it yielded fast first results and partly because it is a case from which FAO could learn, especially the activities addressing land-rights issues for women in Turkana and Tana River. The Gender Unit managed to encourage some initial changes in attitude, on which FAO could build. The lesson from this case is that despite applying gender mainstreaming in the preparation and planning phase, gender is not automatically being absorbed by actors at all levels. There is, therefore, a need for: (1) follow-up on partner commitment; (2) to ensure that what should have been delivered

GEP objective 3. Women and men have equal access to goods and services for agricultural development and to markets.

137. FAO has contributed to the promotion of women's participation in its projects, both through the launch of women-specific interventions and by fixing quotas in mixed projects. This contribution is warranted by two considerations. The first is that, in many countries, women are the primary food producers. The second is that FAO is mandated to contribute to the empowerment of women in situations where gender gaps exist in the agricultural sector.
138. Many of FAO's projects aim to improve women's access to goods and services for agricultural development and to markets. Women beneficiaries have thus received appreciable support in terms of inputs, extension services and capacity development in organizational skills. However, these projects often do not challenge pre-existing gender roles. The facilitated access by women actually differs from that promoted among men in both type and scope, even if both are within the same sub-sector or value chain. There are, of course, exceptional projects involving an appreciation of gender roles. For example, in a Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) project on coffee production in Uganda, both male and female beneficiaries from farmer groups consider the project to have promoted gender equality, especially in production, access to market and income generation. Coffee production and marketing were initially male-dominated activities, but following the intervention, women have begun to participate. As a result, both women and men are producing and selling coffee and looking after their children's needs. A reduction in gender-based domestic violence was also mentioned by some beneficiaries as a result of the project intervention. In Paraguay, a cotton-farming project assisted in changing behaviour towards gender roles. Cotton farming is considered a male-dominated sector in the country, but the project made efforts to integrate women throughout the implementation process, including cultivation. Women were invited to participate in training activities with their children, which led to greater uptake of the activity.
139. Still, at times, the focus on women draws complaints from male farmers, who highlight their own poverty and hardship. Such complaints raise questions about men's perception of FAO interventions and the possibility of backlash, such as objections to women's participation in projects or, worse, conjugal conflicts ending in separation. For example, the exclusive focus on women in projects in the Gambia and Ghana exposed FAO projects to claims, made by a number of senior government officers, that FAO personnel were mostly women and, for this reason, work in the field was often focused on women. The Evaluation Team noted that the issue was not necessarily a focus on women, but rather messaging in projects that did not underline the benefits to households – including their men – of women's participation. Therefore, even when interventions exclusively target women, it is necessary to involve men, through sensitization and consultation, to ensure community acceptance and support. In Nandi, in Kenya, such household/community involvement in the vegetable-garden intervention not only supported project implementation, but also encouraged men to partake in what was previously considered women's work.
140. In both RAF and REU, women-specific projects or components are often tacitly prioritized through the selection of crop varieties and livestock managed by women, such as cassava in the Gambia and Ghana and small ruminants in Zimbabwe. In REU,

project interventions relate to resources that women control, such as poultry, rabbits or handicrafts.

141. The same tacit selection seems to occur in relation to interventions seeking to develop value chains. Income-generating activities and the promotion of women's productive skills are perhaps the most common area of work in FAO projects targeting women, due to their predominant role in the production sector. For instance, fisheries, poultry, vegetable gardening and small ruminants are sub-sectors in which women feature as key actors across the value chain, hence, these areas receive particular attention.
142. RAF probably has the greatest number of interventions supporting the development of gender-sensitive value chains. For example, one FMM project³⁹ has interventions in 12 countries,⁴⁰ strengthening the capacities of small producers in agro-entrepreneurship, while raising the awareness of policymakers on institutional frameworks for supporting agro-entrepreneurship. In Swaziland, one project concentrated on supporting the commercialization of sweet potatoes, grown exclusively by women farmers (TCP/SWA/3503).
143. In the RNE region, FAO, UN Women and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) have partnered in a project that aims to develop women's entrepreneurship.⁴¹ FAO is responsible for increasing opportunities for women-led businesses in selected value chains. In one project in Tunisia, FAO also supported the government in strengthening the role of women clam collectors with a view to increasing their income.
144. Facilitating women's access to inputs, services and markets is commendable. However, it should be underlined that in most of these projects, the beneficiary women were both willing and able to participate. There are probably many more women who could not be involved due to project funding constraints. More appreciated are those projects that seek to ensure the participation of women who, notwithstanding willingness, are usually not able to take part due to factors that can be transcended by project support. In REU, RNE and RLC, there are a few good examples of this extra effort to ensure participation (see Box 5). They involve good practices that deserve publicity to inspire projects by FAO and other actors.

³⁹ Value-chain development in support of sustainable intensification in Africa

⁴⁰ Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda and Zambia

⁴¹ Promoting women's empowerment (PWE) for inclusive and sustainable industrial development in the MENA region (phase II); the focus countries are Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia

Box 5: Projects that ensure women's participation and access to goods and services

Similar to the project in Georgia that renovated kindergartens to ensure access to employment for displaced women, a project in south-eastern Turkey faced challenges in reaching women with extension services. The project team devised innovative methods to deliver messages to women, such as making links via schools or attending village weddings.

In Guatemala, the country office developed a model of mobile nurseries for childcare, which are present at almost every project site. There are indications that this approach is contributing to an increase in the number of female participants in project interventions. A similar approach was found in Bolivia, where the evaluation of FAO SO4 noted the efforts of one joint programme to provide childcare services to ensure the active participation of women in Farmer Field School activities.

In Egypt, via a nutrition project (GCP/EGY/024/ITA), FAO supported women's groups through capacity building in nutrition kitchens and food processing, as well as through the extension of microcredit to launch income-generating schemes. One notable achievement of the project was its success in facilitating the travel of young girls and women from their villages to the towns where the training took place. Rural norms and customs constrain such travel, particularly by young girls, if unaccompanied by male guardians. The girls and women were initially accompanied by several male relatives until trust in the project and its interventions was established. The project was prudent nonetheless, using government-licensed cars rather than privately owned vehicles in order to avert any gossip and/or loss of reputation for the girls attending the training.

145. One significant requirement for accessing goods and services for agricultural development and access to markets is information. Projects seem to limit information dissemination to meetings with their immediate beneficiaries/communities. With the notable exception of RAF, projects do not seem to engage in disseminating information to a wider audience, such as through partnerships with national and local radio stations. One long-standing and sustainable community radio project, launched by FAO in RAF countries, is Dimitra. The first intervention was launched in 1994 and is a model that is both feasible and effective, which could be implemented in other regions with relative ease.

GEP objective 4. Women's work burden is reduced by 20 percent through improved technologies, services and infrastructure.

146. It is clearly impossible to calculate in percentage terms the contribution FAO projects have made in reducing women's work burden. However, in virtually all interventions there is, to varying degrees of significance, evidence of improved technologies, services and infrastructure, all of which contribute to time savings and the reduction of workload.

Box 6: The Dimitra approach

Dimitra is an information and communication project, which aims to improve the visibility of rural populations, particularly women. It highlights the role of rural women in agricultural production, so that their interests are better taken into consideration and they can fully participate in the rural development of their communities and countries.

The project has developed the innovative approach of the Dimitra Clubs, a gender-transformative model to facilitate the empowerment of rural populations and women's leadership in order to improve rural livelihoods and gender equality. Results are achieved through community mobilization, dialogue, the use of information and communication technologies, collective action and self-help activities. Support is provided by FAO to strengthen rural people's organizational skills, give them voice and access to decision-making and local governance, with a specific emphasis on women and young people.

Formation of new clubs continues through community initiatives without external support – continuity that corroborates the sustainability of project impact. Sustainability has been observed in several cases: in South Kivu and Katanga Provinces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where Dimitra Clubs are still up and running more than four years after the end of FAO support. In Tshopo Province, 19 Dimitra Clubs have been created by the communities themselves, without any support from FAO, as the populations wanted to replicate the 60 clubs that had been established by FAO. The model enables rural people to engage in self-development and bring about lasting, community-owned changes in their lives, including in terms of gender relations and roles and women's leadership.

In Niger, as found by the CPE undertaken in 2016, there are nearly 1 000 functioning Dimitra Clubs. Both women and men unanimously recognize that the Clubs have brought about positive change in their communities, such as social cohesion, the greater participation of women as decision-makers at village level and, in some cases, a reduction in the burden of the work generally attributed to women through major contributions by men.

147. One example is the inter-agency initiative to provide Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE), which focuses on ensuring access to fuel and energy for cooking, heating, lighting and power for crises-affected populations. FAO has implemented eight SAFE projects in four countries in the Horn of Africa, distributing fuel-efficient stoves that reduce the number of trips women and girls have to make to collect firewood. The SAFE interventions free up time for other income-generating activities and childcare, while simultaneously decreasing the exposure of women and girls to gender-based violence.
148. Numerous FAO projects have helped to improve women's access to water for irrigation. The REU RWEE joint programme in Kyrgyzstan made drip irrigation kits available to women's groups and trained them on their use. The beneficiaries were satisfied that the innovation had reduced their work burden in terms of irrigation. In RAF, a number of projects have supported women, for example, the installation of water-pumps, elevated poly tanks and irrigation hose networks. In RLC, one FAO project in Guatemala,⁴² supporting families affected by the 2014 drought, has similarly provided water tanks in support of affected households.
149. In both RAF and RLC, beneficiaries reported that projects had addressed their water issues in an effective and sustainable manner to the extent that they are now producing crops not only for household consumption, but also for sale. As households realized the significance of the contribution of vegetable gardens, men (husbands, in particular) became interested in supporting their wives in growing vegetables, something that had been culturally defined as a female activity. In a group discussion with the Evaluation Team in Kenya, women beneficiaries reported that their men not only contributed to the reduction of their workload in the gardens, but had also started to take responsibility for some domestic tasks. The first men who helped in the vegetable gardens were initially mocked by their peers, but gradually as more started to join in the work, the gender stereotype was all but erased. In these instances, work time and work burden have been reduced by far more than 20 percent, while the capacity of women to earn more income has been simultaneously enhanced.
150. Similarly, the FTT fish-processing technique has not only reduced women's work burden and improved fish quality, but also benefitted women and children by averting the health risks associated with traditional fish-smoking methods. As in other successful FAO pilot interventions, the FTT technology was adopted by other actors, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), for replication and expansion.
151. In some instances, a reduction of work burden may materialize years after project phase-out. This is the case for the project on fast-maturing shea trees in the community parklands of Ghana (see Box 3). The planted trees may take more than six years to start producing, but the increased density and yield are expected to reduce the time and distance women spend on the collection of shea nuts. If the pilot project succeeds in achieving its target, the benefit will be sustained for 200 to 300 years (the expected life span of a shea tree).
152. Many FAO projects in the RAP region, such as the "Climate change adaptation in agriculture project" (GCP/NEP/070/LDF) in Nepal, introduced better agricultural technologies, such as a drum seeder that saves both time and labour. However, the technology seems to have encouraged women to commit even more time to boosting

⁴² Restablecimiento del Sistema Alimentario y fortalecimiento de la Resiliencia de familias afectadas por la Canícula Prolongada 2014 en municipios de Chiquimula y Jalapa, Guatemala (GCP /GUA/024/SWE)

production and earning more income. Unlike the cases in RAF and RLC, the increased incomes have not affected pre-existing intra-household sharing of responsibilities and roles. Neither have there been any interventions to create gender awareness among men and young people.

3.3 Evaluation question III. Partnerships

How has FAO leveraged partnerships to realize its gender-equality objectives and to empower rural women?

Finding 10. In most countries, FAO continues to work mainly with its traditional national partners, namely ministries of agriculture (including water, livestock and fisheries). However, FAO is gradually reaching out to non-traditional actors, such as ministries of social affairs, women and family, labour and environment.

3.3.1 Main actors working on gender issues in the rural sector

153. Traditionally, ministries of agriculture lead the development agenda in the rural sector in the various regions. Depending on the institutional setup, they often work closely with ministries of environment and water to address the agricultural challenges facing rural populations. When it comes to gender issues, however, other line ministries, such as the social affairs, labour and women, play a key role and, in rural settings, become instrumental partners of the ministries of agriculture.
154. The ministries are also supported in their work by various international partners, including UN agencies, such as the Rome-based agencies (FAO, IFAD and WFP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNIDO and the International Labour Organization (ILO); bilateral donors, such as the EU, the United States of America, Sweden, Canada and Japan; and development banks, such as the World Bank and regional banks. Other non-traditional actors such as the GEF and GCF have also positively influenced gender mainstreaming in their funded interventions.
155. In some of the countries visited by the Evaluation Team, in RLC (Paraguay and Guatemala), RNE (Mauritania and Tunisia), RAF (Ghana and Kenya), RAP (Nepal) and REU (Georgia, Turkey and Kyrgyzstan), civil-society organizations have had a growing role in raising awareness and advocating for relevant gender issues, such as women's access to land, women's access to IT services, the economic empowerment of vulnerable women and women's representation in farmer and producer organizations.

3.3.2 FAO's main partners for delivering gender-related work

Finding 11. FAO works with a diverse group of partners on its gender-related work at the coordination and implementation levels in the various regions. These include UN agencies, donors and civil-society organizations. The extent of these collaborations varies from one country to another.

156. FAO is working with partners to deliver gender-related work at both coordination and implementation levels.

157. Partnerships have been forged with national counterparts, such as the ministries of agriculture in all of the countries visited. In doing so, country offices have encouraged better political and technical support (Guatemala, Ghana, Tunisia and Syria), dissemination and uptake of knowledge products among partners and counterparts, making sure they are informed of ongoing policy processes. Beyond informing FAO programmes and projects, the CGAs have the potential to inform regional and national programmes and policies. A good example is Ghana, where the finalization of the second generation of NAIPs is underway. The Ghanaian Ministry of Agriculture's Gender Unit has indicated its interest in benefiting from the CGA to inform its own projects.
158. At the coordination level, in most of the countries visited by the Evaluation Team, the FAO country office was a member of the Country Gender Thematic Group. These gender groups often include only UN agencies, but sometimes have broader membership. The degree of FAO's participation in these groups varies from country to country depending on the FAO's interest and the GFP's availability, motivation and competency.
159. In REU, FAO is an active member of the Issue-based Coalition on Gender Equality for the Europe and Central Asia Region and has established a strong partnership with the European Institute for Gender Equality, among others. In Kyrgyzstan, FAO is one of the most active agencies in the Gender Thematic Group. The agencies prepare a joint annual workplan with activities, outputs, participants and lead agencies, cooperating partners and sources of funds. The expected outcome is that the comparative advantages of the agencies will be used to support gender-sensitive policy and strategy.
160. In Tunisia, FAO co-founded and chaired a gender network that saw its membership rise from 30 to around 300 actors working on gender issues in the country. The network met every three months to discuss the gender work undertaken by all relevant actors in Tunisia and to explore potential areas of collaboration. However, having been active for six years, the network is now dormant, following a change of priorities and leadership in FAO Tunisia. In Nepal, Egypt and Mauritania, FAO is a member of the UN Interagency Gender Working Group. However, membership is more nominal than anything else, due to the frequent changes in the GFP and the positioning of the country offices on gender issues.
161. In the RAP region, FAO is a member of the Regional UN Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, as well as several sub-groups and working groups, including on gender statistics, gender-based violence, disaster and emergency relief, and human rights. The regional Gender Team has provided technical inputs on the status of rural women, gender equality in agriculture, rural development and food-related thematic areas for studies and reports prepared by the Thematic Working Group. The ongoing collaboration with other UN agencies through this Working Group has resulted in publications such as the "Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific: Baseline and Pathways for Transformative Change by 2030".
162. FAO is working with many development organizations and resource partners to advocate for and implement gender-specific interventions and to mainstream gender in agricultural and rural development interventions. At the global level, FAO is implementing the RWEE joint programme with UN Women, IFAD and WFP. Since 2012, RWEE has implemented joint and targeted activities in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda. It supports rural women's economic empowerment in four main ways: (1) improved food and nutrition security; (2) increased income to

sustain livelihoods; (3) enhanced participation in decision making; and (4) a more gender-responsive policy environment for rural women in agriculture. FAO's many partners include the World Bank (with which it is implementing a study on women's empowerment and male out-migration), the International Food Policy Research Institute (with which it is compiling an index to measure women's empowerment in agriculture), the KIT Royal Tropical Institute and CGIAR.

163. The Evaluation Team visited programme activities in Kyrgyzstan, where UN Women is supporting community development and providing training on human rights and women's rights. WFP is looking at nutrition, collecting data to track consumption changes and improvements in nutritional diversity. IFAD provides finance and has introduced and tested the GALS methodology, while FAO provides training for women's groups on issues such as integrated pest management, the processing of agricultural produce, the use of new varieties of fruit and vegetables, and access to greenhouses and drip irrigation.
164. RAF has built strategic alliances with regional political entities, such as the African Union Commission, ECOWAS and ECCAS, to enhance the commitment of their member states to policies, strategies and plans that contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of rural women. These alliances have assisted regional and country offices in their follow-up of interventions at national and local-community levels.
165. In the RLC region, FAO has established several partnerships at both regional and national level to enhance the potential of its work on gender. At the regional level, FAO has partnered with CELAC to develop the gender strategy for its Action Plan on Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication 2025. FAO has also partnered with UN Women, the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming of Mercosur (REAF) and the Central American Integration System (SICA) for the "#RuralWomen, women with rights" campaign. Civil society and non-profit organizations, such as the Fundación Microfinanzas BBVA, have also joined the campaign. Through the "Health, Knowledge and Flavours" campaign, FAO has forged diverse partnerships and engaged with chefs and local media to improve communication and dissemination. In addition, since 2015, FAO has been collaborating with WHO and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) to publish the "Panorama of Food and Nutrition Security in Latin America and the Caribbean", which presents good quality gender data and analysis for the region.
166. As regards partnerships with donors, in the RNE region, FAO is currently implementing six gender-focused projects funded by Canada, Japan, Italy and the UN Peacebuilding Fund in various countries, including Egypt, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen. In addition, seven ongoing FAO-implemented projects funded by the EU, Sweden and Canada have a gender-specific component and/or are mainstreaming gender in project activities across different RNE countries. Furthermore, in all the countries visited by the Evaluation Team, FAO has been working through letters of agreement with local NGOs to promote gender equality in different subsectors of agriculture (for example, fisheries in Mauritania, access to land in Tunisia and livelihood support in Syria). In RAP, FAO is also leveraging several partnerships with donors, including Australian Aid and USAID in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the EU in Sri Lanka, and the UN Peacebuilding Fund in Myanmar and Pakistan.

3.4 Evaluation question IV. Comparative advantage

What is FAO's comparative advantage when it comes to promoting gender equality?

Finding 12. FAO's comparative advantage is based on its expert knowledge of the agricultural and rural sectors, access to and a track record of working with vulnerable rural populations, including rural women. FAO is viewed as a neutral technical expert and trusted adviser and has strong institutional entry points in agriculture and rural development institutions. FAO's global presence and wide geographical footprint is highly appreciated by its partners.

167. FAO's overall comparative advantage lies in its recognized technical expertise within the broad agriculture sector. National partners consider FAO to be a trusted neutral adviser with a proven track record in rural development. This perceived neutrality gives FAO "a seat at the table" at the political level when governments are addressing sensitive national issues, such as land-tenure reforms and labour-law revisions.
168. Furthermore, policy formulation and analysis, capacity building and FAO's strong expertise in agricultural statistics are all relevant entry points for gender work. In the REU region, for example, FAO has significant expertise in producing sex-disaggregated data in different subsectors. Some of FAO's global resources on gender and rural women are also highly valued by stakeholders. REU has made an effort to prepare and share publications from the region and EU member countries on best practices and insights into gender mainstreaming.
169. FAO's exhaustive geographical footprint around the globe and its highly diversified workforce make it an ideal platform for learning and knowledge-sharing between regions. In many countries in Africa, for example, this added value is furthered by the presence of FAO field offices in rural areas – in some cases, as the only UN presence. The mix of FAO's personnel (international and national) is also highly appreciated, as it ensures the quality of technical advice provided, as well as its appropriateness to local contexts. Local staff contribute to FAO's understanding of the socio-cultural and political context, while international staff bring experience from around the world.
170. In some cases, FAO is also considered a valuable financial resource partner, especially by local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are sometimes able to access their first source of external funding through FAO projects. FAO's funding, in the form of TCPs, is greatly appreciated by government institutions, as it allows them to finance pilot initiatives that they cannot cover with their regular budgets.
171. When it comes to promoting gender equality, FAO has the potential to leverage these advantages, especially its expert knowledge of rural issues as they relate to rural women. FAO's privileged relationship with national ministries of agriculture puts it in an excellent position to advocate for gender mainstreaming in agriculture and to provide capacity-building support to government staff. It also gives FAO the opportunity to mobilize funds with various resource partners to tackle gender gaps in rural areas.
172. In the RLC region, FAO is perceived as having strong technical capacity to integrate gender into its policy support and overall interventions. Often, FAO is the only agency with the track record and knowledge to work with rural women and is well placed to leverage its partnerships with ministries of women and UN Women to provide better-targeted interventions.

173. In addition, FAO's convening power to bring together different actors and sectors to discuss gender-related issues in agriculture has been evident in its support for inter-institutional committees within the ministries of agriculture of countries such as Paraguay and Guatemala. Similarly, involving civil-society groups and parliamentarians in the approval of laws and institutional policies is an important landmark.

3.5 Evaluation question V. Lessons learned, enabling factors and challenges

What are the key lessons learned, enabling factors and challenges that need to be addressed to better support Members in achieving gender-equality targets under internationally agreed development goals and international accords, such as the SDGs and CEDAW?

Finding 13. There is still insufficient political and financial prioritization from government counterparts and a generally narrow understanding of gender, despite the awareness raising conducted. Capacity building and the distribution of staff resources within FAO have been inadequate for the challenges that lie ahead.

3.5.1 Main challenges in the external environment

174. In many countries across all five regions covered by FAO, there is still insufficient commitment and capacity, both at government and country-office level, to promote gender-equality goals. Although most FAO Members have ratified CEDAW and all have adopted the SDGs, concrete, on-the-ground actions to deliver on these high-level commitments are still lacking.
175. In the REU region, all countries have ratified CEDAW. All have institutional commitments to gender at a high level, as well as frameworks for gender policies and strategies, and institutional gender mechanisms. However, these commitments are not always put into practice. While there may be quotas for women in parliament and leadership posts, often, these are not filled. Technical staff in the agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry ministries are mainly men, even though there may be an almost equal gender balance among students in these areas. In addition, in many countries, the issue of gender is the responsibility of a separate ministry and there is no GFP in the ministry of agriculture. This is particularly problematic for FAO, as its work should be supporting national government priorities. Furthermore, the non-political prioritization of gender equality often translates into insufficient national budgetary commitments, hindering the prospect of successful pilots being replicated and expanded.

3.5.2 Internal and structural challenges within FAO

176. Although FAO has the advantage of having access to and a track record of working with vulnerable rural populations, including rural women, in some regions, its efforts are hampered by language issues. In countries with diverse ethnic groups, projects usually use the country's official languages in their outreach and capacity-building activities, as it is costly to translate training materials into local languages. Yet, it is women and minorities who are most likely to be excluded as a result of this. Similarly, in projects implemented in countries with refugees and displaced populations, the project teams find it difficult to communicate with elderly people and women who may not speak the country's official language.

177. In addition, in some conservative societies, it is hard to reach women (particularly if FAO or extension staff are men). In south-eastern Turkey (see Box 5), project teams have had to adopt innovative methods to contact women, such as making links via schools or attending village weddings. Cultural barriers may also extend to the women themselves, who don't always see that they have a potential role outside the home or the right to access and visibility.
178. FAO's key internal challenges are (1) the varying levels of understanding among staff, especially technical staff, when it comes to what mainstreaming entails in practice in their areas of work, (2) inadequate staff resources, time and (3) capacity to promote gender work.
179. Another key issue often raised by the Gender Team is the lack of sufficient commitment to gender mainstreaming by Technical Officers and FAORs. Although this could be true in some cases, what the Evaluation Team found (which could be interpreted as a lack of commitment) was more of a consistently weak understanding of how to identify and address gender issues in FAO's technical work. Technical Officers met during this evaluation expressed their readiness to work on gender, but highlighted their limited understanding of how to do it and the lack of tailored support from the Gender Team to enable them to mainstream gender effectively in their technical work. This capacity gap was also identifiable among many FAORs, hindering the implementation of the GEP at the decentralized level.
180. Another challenge to work on gender at regional and country levels is the lack of gender expertise in decentralized offices, particularly at country level. This resource gap is negatively affecting the quantity and quality of gender work delivered by FAO at regional and country level. It contributes to the lack of systematic gender analysis in project design, the low gender capacity of Technical Officers and FAORs, and the insufficient dissemination and communication of gender knowledge products developed at headquarters and regional level.
181. Although FAO has committed significant resources to gender over the past five years in the face of limited resources and budget cuts, the distribution of these resources has not necessarily been equitable among FAO regions and headquarters. The RNE and RAP regions each have only one Gender Officer covering 19 and 42 countries, respectively, appointed only in 2014. Moreover, in the RNE region, the GFPs in the county offices visited by the Evaluation Team have full-time activities in addition to their gender responsibility, so are not always able to allocate 20 percent of their time to gender. Unlike some other regions, FAORs in these offices have not taken the decision, or have not had sufficient funds, to hire national gender staff to ensure adequate coverage and continuity of gender work in their offices.

3.6 Lessons learned

- i. Having an organizational gender policy with a clear vision and gender-equality objectives, in addition to underlying implementation arrangements, is paramount to promoting and guiding FAO's gender work. The GEP needs to be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the internal and external changes affecting FAO.
- ii. For a technical organization like FAO, it is important to acknowledge that gender mainstreaming is the responsibility of all staff and not just Gender Officers. It is, therefore, crucial to make sure that Technical Officers and FAORs leading the Organization's work at

- the decentralized level are fully capable of ensuring, together with the Gender Team, that gender is adequately mainstreamed in their respective areas of work.
- iii. There have been many efforts to produce gender-sensitive knowledge products in the various areas of FAO's work. However, more effort is needed to ensure these knowledge products are properly contextualized and disseminated, so as to guarantee optimal use at the decentralized level.
 - iv. The best results in the field are achieved when an accurate analysis is carried out of the different gender roles at intervention sites and when both women and men are involved in the intervention from the beginning.

3.7 Enabling factors

- i. To effectively mainstream gender in FAO's work at country level, the following conditions need to be met: (1) strong political commitment, (2) an understanding of gender issues in rural settings by FAO staff and their national counterparts, and (3) adequate capacity and resources for these actors to address the issues identified in their respective technical areas.
- ii. Sharing successful experiences of gender mainstreaming in FAO's work across communities, countries and regions is good practice for promoting gender equality and advocating for the development of gender-sensitive policies and programmes for rural and agricultural sectors.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. FAO has contributed to the development of gender-sensitive policies and rural-sector strategies. It has also played an important role in advocating for gender equality in high-level forums and policy processes. At community level, FAO has contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment, as set out in the GEP objectives.

182. In Latin America and Africa, FAO has worked closely with regional institutions to influence policies and bring gender issues to the forefront of the rural agenda. In other regions, FAO has worked at country level with ministries of agriculture and women to develop gender-sensitive policies and strategies for the agricultural sector. In all regions, FAO has also worked at field level to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through relevant interventions, by ensuring the adequate participation of women in project activities and by producing sex-disaggregated data.

Conclusion 2. FAO's proximity to rural communities and its track record of working in rural settings puts the Organization in an ideal position to play a key role in addressing gender issues in rural areas. FAO is viewed as a neutral adviser by national and international partners alike. That said, more efforts need to be made to ensure FAO is seen as having the potential to promote gender equality in rural settings.

183. Many partners still see FAO as mainly a technical agricultural agency. This limits its efforts to engage in social and normative issues. FAO's national counterparts are less likely to seek the Organization's advice on gender-related topics, preferring to use the limited amount of support available to address technical issues.

Conclusion 3. FAO has established useful ad hoc partnerships, mainly for project implementation. It has not systematically leveraged its recognized knowledge of the agricultural/rural sector to build strategic and long-term partnerships with key actors working on gender. Furthermore, while efforts have been made to ensure adequate support for Members in their pursuit of gender-equality objectives, major gaps and challenges persist, which need to be addressed through collective action.

184. The main challenges include: (1) the gender capacities of technical officers within and outside FAO; (2) the availability of resources for gender-related work within FAO; (3) adequate outreach to partners, including government agencies; and (4) the varying levels of prioritization Members give to gender equality in the rural sector.

Conclusion 4. FAO has taken important action at all levels (corporate, regional and country levels) to operationalize the GEP. Key actions include the commitment of human and financial resources to support the gender-mainstreaming structure. Implementation has not been smooth, however. Recent developments, such as the SDGs and UN-SWAP 2.0, highlight the need for reflection on the Policy's relevance.

185. The following actions were particularly useful in supporting the Organization's gender work: (1) the placement of Gender Officers or experts in all regions, supported by a dedicated Gender Team at headquarters; (2) the strengthening of the GFP network; (3) the formulation of regional gender strategies; and (4) the implementation of minimum standards, such as capacity-building efforts and the generation of relevant knowledge

products, mainly at corporate level. However, there was a lack of clarity on oversight of the GEP and varying commitment by senior managers and staff to ensure adequate consideration of gender issues in the Organization's technical work. There were also gaps in the monitoring and reporting on the results of gender work.

4.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. FAO should update the GEP to take into account the internal changes that have occurred within the Organization, as well as external developments relevant to FAO's mandate. In addition to updating the GEP, it is important to develop an action plan, including short- to medium-term gender-equality targets, to ensure adequate operationalization and monitoring of progress towards high-level policy objectives.

186. In implementing this recommendation, due account should be taken of the SDGs and the requirements of UN-SWAP 2.0, as well as the emerging lessons on the relevance and usefulness of the minimum standards. The suggested action plan should be formulated in such a way that facilitates implementation of the GEP through FAO's Strategic Framework.

Recommendation 2. FAO should expand and learn from its partnerships with key actors working to address gender issues in agriculture, for example, IFAD, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF and WFP. These partnerships should recognize the comparative advantage of FAO in rural areas and be adequately leveraged when developing joint activities.

187. In implementing this recommendation, the following actions could be considered:
- Build on successful partnerships at project level to strengthen overall partnerships on gender issues at country and regional level.
 - Learn from and replicate the best practices of other partners in the field of gender mainstreaming, such as UNDP's gender-equality Seal Certification, which incentivizes country offices to integrate gender equality into all aspects of their development work. WFP and UNICEF have similar schemes.

Recommendation 3. FAO needs to further strengthen the capacity of Technical Officers to mainstream gender in their work, particularly through customized advice and support from Gender Officers and GFPs in the decentralized offices. FAO needs to ensure that GFPs are equipped and available to provide this support role in all regions. SP teams and technical departments also need to provide advice on how to mainstream gender in programmes and projects in their areas of specialization.

188. In implementing this recommendation, the following actions could be considered:
- Conduct mandatory and periodic training sessions for Technical Officers and senior managers.
 - Make use of PEMS to ensure managers are accountable for gender-related results annually. While a requirement exists for the GFPs to include a gender objective/indicator in their PEMS, it is important to extend this requirement to senior managers (FAORs,

Directors, ADGs and SP leaders), who are ultimately responsible for implementation of gender-related work.

- Transfer or temporarily mobilize officers from the Gender Team at headquarters to regions where support is most needed, particularly the Near East and North Africa, South and West Asia, and West and Central Africa.
- SP teams and technical departments produce guidance material on how to mainstream gender in their programmes and projects. The Gender Team at headquarters should coordinate its production and dissemination.
- Ensure that the GFP mandate includes provision of and support for technical officers, and that requisite time is allocated for this activity.
- Incentivize officers from other technical divisions and field offices who are gender champions by giving visibility to their contribution (for example, through award mechanisms).

Recommendation 4. FAO should map and review the existing mechanisms to monitor and report on gender-related achievements, particularly at country level, to enhance the Organization's capacity to track progress towards the GEP objectives. Effective monitoring and reporting is essential to identify gaps and obstacles that need to be addressed, as well as lessons learned and success stories to be shared across countries and technical divisions.

189. In implementing this recommendation, the following actions could be considered:

- Include an assessment of country programme contributions to gender targets in the annual CPF review.
- Where possible, combine these reviews with the development of the GDA at country level.