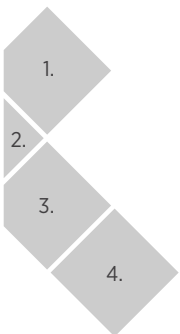




Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



REGIONAL GENDER STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2022-2025 FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



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Abbreviations and acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADG	Assistant Director-General
APRC	Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BE	Better environment
BL	Better life
BN	Better nutrition
BP	Better production
CGAs	Country gender assessments
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CPF	Country programming framework
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
DVI	Digital Village Initiative
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAOR	FAO Representative
GAP	Gender action plan
GEP	Gender Equality Policy
GFP	Gender focal point
ICT	Information and communication technology
IFIs	International financial institutions
LDCs	Least developed countries
PPA	Programme Priority Area
RAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
RP	Regional Priority
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small island developing states
VGGT	Voluntary guidelines for the governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forestry
VGSSF	Voluntary guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries



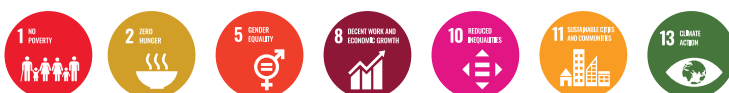
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1 Introduction

According to the 2021 report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in Asia and the Pacific (FAO and UNICEF, 2021), progress on food security and nutrition has slowed despite all efforts, and the region is far from achieving the SDG 2030 targets. In this region alone, more than 1.1 billion people did not have access to adequate food in 2020 – an increase of almost 150 million people in just one year. The United Nations has resolved not to “leave anyone behind” in pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Policy on Gender Equality (GEP) 2020–2030 (FAO, 2020a) is specifically aligned with the gender-related targets under SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (Reduced inequality), SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) and SDG 13 (Climate action). Furthermore, FAO is entrusted as the custodian agency for one gender-related indicator under SDG 2 and two gender-related indicators under SDG 5:

- Indicator 2.3.2: Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and Indigenous status
- Indicator 5.a.1: Women’s ownership and rights over agricultural land and other forms of property and natural resources
- Indicator 5.a.2: Women’s equal rights to land ownership and/or control.

Gender equality is prominent throughout the UN Agenda 2030 as a cross-cutting theme, with more than 50 gender-related indicators across SDGs. All the partners, including FAO, are urged to address the underlying causes of gender inequality and work in a way that ensures equal opportunities through integrated and gender-transformative approaches.





FAO in Asia and the Pacific

Promoting gender equality across the policy and programme framework of FAO is crucial for the Organization to realize its mandate to eradicate poverty and eliminate hunger and malnutrition. Across the Asia and the Pacific region, women are well recognized as important contributors to food production and all other aspects of food systems, whether in the agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture or livestock sector. However, their lives and livelihoods are being affected in unprecedented ways by persistent social and gender inequalities, climate change and the current COVID-19 pandemic.

During the period of the previous regional gender strategy (2017–2019) (FAO, 2017a), FAO focused its efforts on strengthening gender capacities of member countries and partners to address the challenges affecting women in the region. These efforts included enhancing national capacities to design gender-responsive policies, ensuring equal access of female and male farmers to productive resources and services and climate-smart and labour-saving technologies and practices, and building resilient livelihoods for women and men. FAO supported the formulation and implementation of projects focusing on gender equality and rural women’s empowerment across member countries. In 2020 and 2021, FAO generated substantial knowledge to support the formulation of gender-responsive policy and programme formulation and raise awareness on the status of rural women and gender inequalities in the region (FAO, 2022a). Country gender assessments of the agriculture and rural sectors were conducted in several countries,¹ and FAO developed a paper on gender and youth implications for innovation and digitalization in the Pacific (FAO, 2021a) as a contribution to the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Solutions Forum. FAO is also mainstreaming gender-equality aspects through the United Nations Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases regional programme in Asia. A regional consultation on the voluntary guidelines on gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition was organized in November 2021 by the Committee on World Food Security, in close collaboration with the other United Nations Rome-based Agencies, to contribute to the preparation of the voluntary guidelines.

To address existing and emerging gender-based challenges, focused thinking, planning and action by FAO and its Member Nations in Asia and the Pacific region will be critical for sustaining food systems in the near future. The commitment to gender equality across the regional priorities and initiatives is aligned with FAO’s Strategic Framework 2022–31 (FAO, 2021b) and FAO’s Policy on Gender Equality (GEP) 2020–2030 (FAO, 2020a), as confirmed in the documents submitted to the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC)

¹ Bangladesh, China, India, Kiribati, Pakistan, Palau and Tuvalu. In addition, preparations to conduct a country gender assessment were started in other countries.

(FAO, 2020b) which is the governing body for the region. Regional and country-level policies and programmes must thus address gender inequality in the access to and control over productive and natural resources and in markets and institutions that define economic and political landscapes.

FAO emphasizes the need to work with women and men because social norms, gender divisions of labour, gender disparities and gender-based power relations affect both women's and men's ability to make choices and decisions in various spheres of life and work. The economic benefit resulting from gender equality would be multifold. As stated in the State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA), 2010–2011, "If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20–30 percent. This could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5–4 percent ..." and "Closing the gender gap in agricultural inputs alone could lift 100–150 million people out of hunger" (FAO, 2011). Therefore, both gender equality and women's empowerment are part of FAO's strategy. Men's participation in gender mainstreaming is seen as essential for addressing gender inequality concerns across sectors of work.

FAO's regional gender strategies translate FAO's corporate gender-equality policy (FAO, 2020a) and gender action plan (FAO, 2021c)² into an actionable agenda and present the strategic and programme framework for FAO's gender-related work in the region. This regional gender strategy and action plan for Asia and the Pacific is to be implemented during the period 2022–25.

1.1 Objectives

The main objectives of the regional gender strategy and action plan for Asia and the Pacific 2022–25 (strategy and action plan) are to:

- identify and respond to regional trends and challenges that affect women's equal and meaningful participation in the sectors of agriculture, forestry, livestock and fisheries;
- mainstream gender perspectives in the regional priorities and initiatives determined by APRC, in line with the FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020–2030 and the FAO Strategic Framework;
- establish regional focus areas that will enable gender equality and women's empowerment across agriculture, forestry, livestock, aquaculture and fisheries sectors; and
- respond to new and emerging challenges and needs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to build back gender-sensitive and -resilient lives and livelihoods.

1.2 Scope

This strategy and action plan provides a programme and action framework at regional, subregional and country levels. It does not, however, detail specific country-level and technical actions. Country-level teams should draw up specific activities to be implemented locally that cater to specific and situational country contexts but that are based on the strategy and action plan.

Audience

The intended users of this strategy include FAO Representatives (FAORs) and technical staff, including gender focal points (GFPs) and project staff at regional, subregional and country offices.

Time frame

The timeline of this strategy is 2022–25. The action plan is for a period of two years (2022–23), and is linked with the biennial workplan 2022–23. Following this period, it will be reviewed for extension.

² The FAO Gender Action Plan (FAO, 2021c) was adopted by the Programme Committee in November 2021 and is embedded in FAO's Strategic Framework 2022–31 (FAO, 2021c) and the Medium-Term Plan 2022–25 (FAO, 2021d).

1.3 Methodology

The team developing this strategy and action plan used a combination of primary and secondary data. These were collected using a desk review,³ an online survey⁴ and consultation interviews with selected persons across the FAO headquarters gender staff, FAORs, staff of country offices, GFPs and technical staff of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP).

The strategy was shared and commented on by staff and reviewed before being finalized.⁵

1.4 Organization

The strategy and action plan begins with an overview of the regional context. This is followed by a gender perspective on the regional priorities adopted under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31 (FAO, 2021b). The strategy includes five main focus areas on gender equality and women’s empowerment for the region. The two-year action plan for the region is presented in Annex 1. The action and outreach plan is presented in Annex 2; this shows how FAO intends to reach out to different stakeholders and partners through various activities.



³ The desk review covered the *FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020–2030* (FAO, 2020a), the previous regional gender strategies and action plans for Asia and the Pacific and other regions, country gender assessment reports, gender stocktaking reports, the *Evaluation of FAO’s work on gender* (FAO, 2019a), APRC reports, country evaluation reports and external documents from the United Nations and other international organizations.

⁴ An online survey conducted between August and September 2021 received 26 responses, from FAO RAP technical staff (8); FAORs/Assistant FAORs (4); other technical and administrative staff from FAO country offices (9); and FAO gender focal points (5).

⁵ A draft of the strategy was circulated with the Gender Team, FAO headquarters, FAO country offices, and technical staff in RAP. The final draft benefitted from comments and suggestions received. It was presented in an internal seminar on 14 December 2021, attended by all concerned staff within FAO RAP, headquarters, subregional and country offices, and was finalized after incorporating their inputs. The consultant worked closely with the gender officer at RAP throughout the process and received feedback and inputs while drafting the strategy.



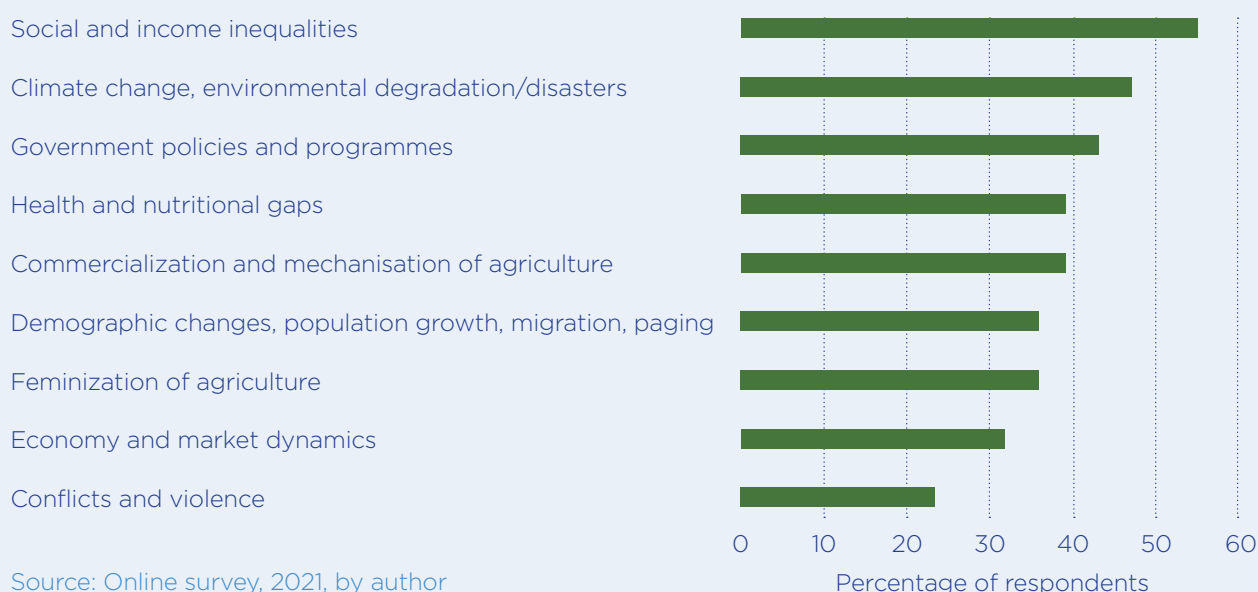
2 | Regional context

The Asia and the Pacific region has witnessed considerable progress in food security and nutrition in recent decades and has some of the world's fastest-growing economies. However, the region still faces widespread poverty, socioeconomic and gender inequality, injustice and marginalization, political instability, unplanned urban growth and increasing migration from rural to urban areas, along with other demographic changes. Out of the 46 Member Nations in the Asia and the Pacific region (FAO, 2022b), 11 are categorized as least developed countries (LDCs) (UN, 2021); eight in Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal and Timor-Leste) and three in the Pacific (Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu).

According to the Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2021 (FAO and UNICEF, 2021), progress on food security and nutrition in the region has slowed and the region is not on track to achieve 2030 targets. It is estimated that about 375.8 million people in the region faced hunger in 2020, which is more than 50 million more than in 2019 (FAO and UNICEF, 2021). Labour-force participation rates for females vary across the region but are still below those of men, standing at 54 percent in southeastern Asia and the Pacific and 21 percent in southern Asia compared with 75 percent and 68 percent for men, respectively (ILO, 2022).

Secondary research and feedback from the online survey conducted for developing this strategy reveal some common and significant regional trends (Figure 1). Along with existing and structural social and economic challenges, inequalities that affect women's participation in agriculture, livestock, fishery and forestry sectors result in differentiated impact on women and men. This needs to be addressed in this strategy. Greater gender equality could increase the gross domestic product (GDP) in Asia and the Pacific in 2025 by 12 percent over a business-as-usual GDP trajectory (Woetzel *et al.*, 2018).

Figure 1. The most significant regional trends identified for Asia and the Pacific.



2.1 Persisting gender inequalities impact prospects of agrifood systems

While gender inequalities are palpable across the board, the lack of sufficient sex-disaggregated and gender-specific data on important development indicators in the region makes it difficult to analyse conditions on the ground effectively, particularly with respect to the impacts on agrifood systems.

In most of Asia and the Pacific, women experience the triple work burden of production, reproduction and community management at the domestic and public level. Women in the region invest more time in unpaid care and domestic work than do men. With women mainly involved in meeting basic household needs in most countries of the region, their domestic responsibilities call for more gender-responsive public services including better access to water, sanitation, electricity, health and education. Women's community management roles sustain and care for not only people but also natural resources, livestock, common property resources, indigenous infrastructure, and natural and cultural heritage.

In addition, their productive labour is increasingly a major source of family income and sustenance. In agriculture, women are usually keepers of seed and providers of farm labour, in particular for sowing, harvesting and post-harvest work. They also play important roles in choosing crops for home consumption and collecting edible products from forests or common lands. Women also engage in food processing and marketing throughout agrifood value chains. However, much of women's contribution to agricultural labour throughout Asia and the Pacific region is invisible in macro statistics.

With more and more men migrating for work in cities or abroad, women are increasingly involved in farming, ensuring food security for their families, and engaging in the local and market economy. In some cases, however, women also migrate, especially if men are more involved in farming activities or if there are few other sources of income. According to

UN Women, however, migrant women have fewer options than men and experience lower pay, limited protections and are largely restricted to informal jobs; they are also at greater risk of violence, abuse and exploitation (ILO and UN Women, 2021).

Despite their important roles, several social, economic and political factors continue to put women at a disadvantage to men in terms of political, social and economic benefits. The lack of access to and control over productive and natural resources limits women's access to government schemes and services that could otherwise help them boost their production and enhance agrifood systems. Limited access to labour markets, decent work and infrastructure and technology as workers and gender gaps in financial literacy and ability to access loans and inputs further limit women's productivity and efficiency in delivering food security and nutrition for all. Social barriers such as restricted mobility and violence against women and gender gaps in access to education, capacity building, training and knowledge and information services further amplify gender inequalities. The lack of acknowledgement of women's roles and rights in policy development and programmes and limitations on their participation in public spaces also restrict their decision-making capacities, reduces their voice in building resilient agrifood systems and hinders their roles in ensuring food security as food producers and caregivers (ADB, 2013a). Women also face higher prevalence of food insecurity than men in Asia and this prevents them from fully realizing their potential (FAO *et al.*, 2021). The gender inequalities have had significant impacts on women's nutrition and health status.

2.2 Destabilizing and gendered consequences of pandemics, natural disasters, climate change and conflicts

According to the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2021*, "Since the incursion of COVID-19 pandemic, the region has been hit by multiple natural and biological disasters, while climate change has continued to warm the world, exacerbating the impacts. This has reshaped and expanded the Asia-Pacific riskscape" (UNESCAP, 2021).

The annual economic loss for Asia and the Pacific due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other disasters is estimated at USD 675 billion or around 2.4 percent of the region's GDP. Of this, USD 405 billion, or 60 percent, are drought-related agricultural losses, disproportionately impacting the rural poor. Climate risks account for around 85 percent of these losses.

Experiences from previous pandemics, large-scale natural shocks and conflicts show that these crises often affect women and men differently (OECD, 2020). Similarly, Indigenous Peoples, who already experience a higher degree of socioeconomic marginalization, are at a disproportionate risk in public-health emergencies as they often reside in remote areas. Their vulnerability is enhanced during pandemics because they lack access to effective monitoring and early-warning systems and health and social services, especially for women (including maternal health).

The COVID-19 crisis

LDCs in Asia and the Pacific have so far been spared from the worst effects of the health emergency. However, the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on their economies, rolling back some of the progress made towards sustainable development and possibly leading to long-term damage (UNCTAD, 2020). The highest numbers of COVID-19 cases in the Asia and the Pacific region have been reported in India, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines, with numbers peaking in 2020; many countries subsequently reported second waves of COVID-19 cases (Statista Research Department, 2021).

Preliminary evidence suggests that the COVID-19 emergency and the related economic downturn have impacted women more severely than men, partially reopening gaps that had been closed (World Economic Forum, 2021). Globally, the pandemic led to a

4 percent decrease in women's employment, compared with a decline of 3 percent for men (ILO, 2021). Social and economic lockdowns resulted in migration from cities back to villages in many countries and dependency on relief for food and medicine, putting large numbers of the poor and marginalized on the edge of survival for long periods. Overall, across the region, the reverse migration of men (i.e. from cities to villages) also increased women's burdens, except where women and men both migrated. Stay-at-home orders and physical distancing are imposing an escalating cycle of tension, power and control on women, which leaves them vulnerable to various mental health issues, including anxiety, depression and trauma. There have been reports of a higher incidence of domestic violence in the region for many women who have been trapped at home with an abusive partner or family member and less able to go out to get help. In some countries, cases of domestic violence have risen by 30 percent (UN Women Asia and Pacific, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic also had a very negative impact on girls' education and educational equality (FAO, 2021e). The pandemic has not only highlighted the need for responsive healthcare systems but also gender-responsive strategies to pandemics.

Containment measures posed new challenges for rural women with respect to their roles in household food security, as agricultural producers, farm managers, processors, traders, wage workers and entrepreneurs (FAO, 2020c). Although the health impact of the pandemic was greater in urban areas than in rural areas, some reports (e.g. Hamadani et al., 2020) indicate that rural women are more vulnerable to the social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic because of the challenges they face in accessing productive resources, services, training, technologies, markets, financial assets and local institutions. Pre-existing gender inequalities have thus been heightened by COVID-19 and this has contributed to exacerbating the consequences of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has thus resulted in multi-layered repercussions for women and girls.

Climate-change risks and impact

Climate change is resulting in stronger and more frequent extreme weather events and sea-level rise. The Asia and the Pacific region is highly susceptible to both because of its extensive coastlines, low-lying territories and many small island states.

In 2020, for example, countries in South and Southwest Asia were hit by several extreme tropical cyclones, and major flood events were reported in Cambodia, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea.

Unpredictable weather patterns can lead to natural resources decline, low or failed crop yields, high food prices and spread of diseases that threaten to wipe out decades of development gains. Shifting rainfall patterns and higher temperatures affect agricultural productivity. Of the 60 percent of people who work in sectors highly susceptible to changing weather patterns in the region, the majority are women, who thus bear the direct brunt of climate change.

There is evidence that social and gender vulnerability impacts women's abilities to anticipate, prepare for, survive, cope with and recover from disasters. Gendered vulnerability to the impacts of natural disasters affects their basic survival, particularly because of the extensive caregiving responsibilities that women hold in their households (CDP, 2022) as well as their lower access and control over key survival and recovery resources, including shelter, transport and food (ADB, 2013b).

The impact of conflicts and the economic crisis

Three countries in the region, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, faced unprecedented crises in 2021, leading to a rapid increase of acute food insecurity (FAO, 2022a). As of March 2022, the people of Afghanistan are suffering one of the world's largest and most severe hunger crises; this is affecting 22.8 million people, equivalent to more than half of the population, as a result of extended drought, conflict, political instability and COVID-19 (FAO, 2022a). In Myanmar, long-standing internal conflict, intercommunal tensions, recurrent climate-related shocks and a military coup in 2021 continue to undermine the stability and availability of food supplies as well as physical and economic access to food. An estimated 779 000 people living in conflict-affected areas in Myanmar are vulnerable to severe food insecurity – a major issue among the displaced, returned, relocated and other crisis-affected people. Since the beginning of 2021, Sri Lanka has been facing serious macroeconomic challenges, caused by high and increasing inflation rates and dwindling foreign currency reserves after revenues from merchandise exports and from the tourist sector were both severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and its containment measures. Prices of cereals and other imported basic food products reached record highs in January 2022. The high prices are severely affecting people's access to food, amid widespread income losses and reduced purchasing power related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which could lead to an overall negative effect on the food security, health and nutrition status of vulnerable people (FAO, 2022e) and increasing inequalities.

The response to such crises should include specific measures to respond to the needs of poor and vulnerable communities most affected, including women.

Armed conflicts in particular undermine the capacity of the most vulnerable populations to produce and access sufficient, diversified and nutritious food, leading to negative coping mechanisms and limited ability to meet basic human needs, hindering their resilience (Food Security Cluster, 2022). Men and women are affected differently by armed conflict: while men are generally at greater risk of being drafted into military groups or killed, women tend to be more vulnerable to physical violence, intimidation and discrimination. Women's full and equal involvement in reconstruction of war-torn communities should be promoted. The needs of both women and men should be recognized when planning community-based agricultural activities for their livelihoods, and women and girls should be protected from gender-based violence in emergency settings (FAO, 2022c).

The war in Ukraine has major implications for global food security and nutrition, triggering new crises in food systems on top of existing challenges that were already undermining the global community's goal of achieving the SDG 2 on Zero Hunger (CFS, 2022). The crisis is causing enormous disruptions in global trade, including food markets. The Russian Federation and Ukraine are among the top three exporters of wheat, maize and sunflower oil, and the Russian Federation is a major exporter of energy and fertilizers (CFS, 2022). As of April 2022, the higher and more volatile food prices are causing increased hunger and malnutrition, especially for the poorest segments of society in low-income countries (CFS, 2022), including women. FAO's simulations suggest that the global number of undernourished people could increase by 8 to 13 million people in 2022/23, with the most pronounced increases taking place in the Asia-Pacific region (FAO, 2022d).

2.3 Gender gaps in accessing information technology and digitalization benefits

From smartphones, drones and big data to the Internet of Things, the world has witnessed a burst of agricultural innovations in the space of information and digital technology over the past two decades. Digital transformation of agriculture has brought people across the value chains closer than their geographies could ever allow. However, there are large parts of the Asia and the Pacific region that suffer in terms of access to and use of these technologies because of socioeconomic disparities and gender inequalities.

Among the challenges that women and girls face are that they do not always own a mobile or smart phone and face restrictions in their use imposed by male and older members of the family. Many lack the literacy needed to understand or access the information that is available on the internet. Data suggest that, across low- and middle-income countries, women are 8 percent less likely than men to own a mobile phone and 20 percent less likely to own a smartphone. They are also 20 percent less likely to use the internet on a mobile device. However, there is also evidence that some of these wide gender gaps are narrowing. In South Asia, for example, the mobile internet gender gap has narrowed from 67 percent in 2017 to 51 percent in 2019, bringing another 78 million women online (GSMA, 2020).

It is important to acknowledge that digitalization of agriculture is not a silver bullet or an end in itself. ICTs and digital technologies are also not gender neutral, either in terms of their design or in their implementation. Rapid technological uptake, if it occurs without an inclusive and sustainable development approach, risks exacerbating existing inequalities and further excluding people who are not digitally connected. The digital gender divide thus is not simply a question of equal access to digital technologies, but also about ensuring women have adequate capacity to make meaningful use of these technologies. Digital inclusion of the most marginalized categories, including rural women and girls, requires a targeted and comprehensive approach.

The Pacific SIDS Solution Forum 2021 discussed the implications for innovation and digitalization from the perspective of gender, women and youth in the Pacific SIDS. A technical paper prepared for this forum assessed the involvement of women and youth in agrifood systems in the Pacific SIDS and their capacity to adopt and devise digital and non-digital innovations (FAO, 2021a). The forum discussed how the gender-based digital divide is significant in rural and agricultural areas and affects women's access to online farming and financial services as well as the ability to buy and sell agrifood raw materials and products respectively.

There is an opportunity for FAO to:

advance equal access to and use of digital technologies in order to promote rural women's equal participation in the transformation of agrifood systems.

support the region and countries in enhancing rural women's access to and uptake of technologies and innovations for agriculture and rural development.

encourage the uptake of approaches that can overcome or change existing discriminatory social norms and address the root causes of gender inequality.



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3 | Regional priorities and gender as cross-cutting theme

FAO's work in the region will be guided by its Strategic Framework 2022–31 (FAO, 2021b), which supports the UN Agenda 2030 and its SDGs. It will do this through the transformation of existing agrifood systems to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable systems for better production (BP), better nutrition (BN), a better environment (BE), and a better life (BL) – the so-called “four betters”, leaving no one behind.⁶

The strategic framework is to be implemented through 20 Programme Priority Areas (PPAs), with four accelerators: technology, innovation, data and complements (governance, human capital and institutions). These will be applied in all of FAO's programmatic interventions to fast-track progress and maximize prospects for contributing to the SDGs while minimizing trade-offs. Gender, youth and inclusion are cross-cutting themes across FAO's work. FAO will focus on supporting Members in Asia and the Pacific in four regional priorities (RPs):

- Transforming agrifood systems for sustainable production and healthy diets;
- Accelerating sustainable natural resources management for biodiversity conservation and climate action;
- Supporting inclusive rural transformation for sustainable agrifood systems and equitable rural societies; and
- Building sustainable and resilient agrifood systems in the Pacific SIDS (FAO, 2022f).

FAO will promote digitalization of the agriculture sector and rural communities, thus generating opportunities for youth and women.

FAO will optimize impact at country levels through corporate initiatives. These include the Hand-in-Hand initiative, which is FAO's evidence-based, country-led and country-owned initiative to accelerate agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development in support of the SDGs (FAO, 2019b). The COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme aims to mitigate the immediate impacts of the pandemic, while building and supporting resilient livelihoods, transforming agrifood systems, moving towards a green recovery, and taking timely actions to prevent the health crisis from becoming a food crisis (FAO, 2020d).

⁶ The four betters represent an organizing principle for how FAO intends to contribute directly to SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger) and SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) and to supporting achievement of the broader SDG agenda. The betters reflect the interconnected economic, social and environmental dimensions of agrifood systems (FAO, 2021b).

FAO RAP requires that gender aspects are mainstreamed as a cross-cutting theme in all programmes and projects planned and implemented in the region, irrespective of the main PPA that the programme or project contributes to. This means that gender equality should be addressed not only in programmes and projects that directly contribute to the PPA on gender equality and rural women's empowerment (BL1), but also all other programmes and projects.

3.1 Regional priority 1: Transforming agrifood systems for sustainable production and healthy diets

FAO recognizes the urgent need to invest in agrifood systems in the region to ensure achievement of the SDGs. Eight PPAs of FAO's Strategic Framework 2022–31 will form the core of this priority for the region and will contribute to achieving the respective betters:

-
- Innovation for sustainable agriculture production (BP1)
 - Blue transformation (BP2)
 - One Health (BP3)
 - Small-scale producers' equitable access to resources (BP4)
 - Healthy diets for all (BN1)
 - Nutrition for the most vulnerable (BN2)
 - Safe food for everyone (BN3)
 - Reducing food loss and waste (BN4)
-

Agrifood systems assume a major role in promoting the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. A gender perspective to these PPAs will allow for greater participation and acknowledgement of women's roles in building sustainable food production and consumption.

Innovation for sustainable agriculture production (BP1)

This PPA promotes sustainable crop, livestock and forestry production systems that are productive and resilient and that create integrated entrepreneurial and business opportunities for small-scale and vulnerable producers through innovation, technologies and enabling policies.

Women's access to and use of technologies and digitalization is critical to improve agricultural production processes (including livestock management). It is also essential to recognize their valuable knowledge in agroecological practices, reduce women's work burden and support women's business as a gender-responsive strategy.

Blue transformation (BP2)

Through this PPA, FAO aims at transforming fisheries to sustainable management through capacity building and applying an ecosystem approach. In aquaculture, support will be based around the areas of innovation and sustainable intensification.

Given women's contribution to post-harvest work in the seafood sector in particular, FAO will encourage country governments and international partner agencies to provide women-friendly labour-saving technologies for domestic and fisheries work (e.g. ovens for fish processing and more-efficient processing and storage equipment); improve infrastructure (electricity, refrigeration, running water, toilets etc.) and services (transportation, health, extension, credit, child-care arrangements at fish processing factories); promote more equitable sharing of work between men and women; and secure women's control over their incomes (FAO, 2016).

In addition, women play an important role in small-scale fishing activities in the region. In aquaculture, women often carry out most of the work of feeding, harvesting and processing fish and shellfish. They can become managers of small household enterprises, such as fishponds, and thus improve their families' income and nutrition. However, women tend to have limited control over ponds and inputs for aquaculture, so they rarely participate in production beyond satisfying their household needs. To address this, FAO will facilitate regulatory provisions for women to get secure access to ponds and water bodies in many countries in Asia and the Pacific, where women are predominantly engaged in inland fisheries.

One Health (BP3)

This PPA addresses gaps in resilience and responses to high-impact biological threats to agrifood systems and human health (zoonoses and antimicrobial resistance).

Creating empowering conditions for women, expanding their roles and boosting their income require interventions that accelerate uptake of gender-responsive technical innovations and biosecurity guidance. This includes training women as paraveterinarians and human health service providers and sensitizing men in their families and neighbourhood to the importance of enhancing the role of women in agrifood systems. A key aspect of this PPA requires assisting Members in enabling women to apply their local knowledge on pest and disease control and improving the health of farmlands and forests. Improving gender balance in the technical and programme staff has proven to be effective for achieving the objectives of One Health (FAO, 2021f) and should be encouraged.

Small-scale producers' equitable access to resources (BP4)

This PPA supports enhanced access of small-scale producers and family farmers to economic and natural resources, markets, services, information, education and technologies through improved policies, strategies and programmes.

By paying particular attention to rural women, FAO in the region will help develop policies for equitable access to and control over economic resources, infrastructure and natural resources. FAO will also support Members in providing women and men with equal access to agricultural support services, which are a major channel to gain access to resources, training and updated information. FAO will address the work burden that most rural women face as a result of the unequal gender division of labour, which assigns them multiple roles and often confines them to performing manually labour-intensive tasks. Support will be given to ensuring women's access to adequate infrastructure and promoting adoption by women of efficient and socially acceptable technologies and practices. These technologies need to be designed to reduce not only rural women's agricultural work burden but also that associated with their household responsibilities (FAO, 2020a). In so doing, it is essential to promote gender-equitable governance of tenure rights to land, water bodies, forests and grazing lands stipulated in the *Voluntary guidelines for the governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forestry* (VGGT) (FAO, 2022g). Farmer Field Schools and its targeted interventions, such as Women Open Schools and Women's Empowerment Farmer Business School, have proved to be effective approaches to improving market access and enhancing entrepreneurial and leadership skills of women. FAO's support is needed not only to ensure that women and men have equal rights and access to services, markets and decent work, but also to ensure equal control over the resulting income and benefits.

Healthy diets for all (BN1)

This PPA supports agrifood system reforms for improved access to healthy diets.

Shaping policies and legislation and supporting women in choices on diversification of food and access to the commons helps women make better nutritional choices for their families. Gender-based analysis of the nutritional and health status of the population and gender-sensitive actions to address the gender gaps are required to ensure expected outcomes of this PPA, not only for women but for all family members. This will contribute to lowering infant mortality and reducing child malnutrition, thereby helping to break intergenerational cycles of malnutrition.

Nutrition for the most vulnerable (BN2)

The aim of this PPA is to ensure an enabling environment for food security and nutrition to address hunger and malnutrition.

In all contexts, women, children, Indigenous Peoples and minorities are at higher risk of hunger and all forms of malnutrition. During pregnancy and lactation, women's ability to participate in paid work is reduced, which limits their earnings. As a consequence, they are seen as a burden on scarce family incomes. In addition, discriminatory gender norms and harmful practices limit educational opportunities for women and girls and restrict their food intake (WFP, 2019), harming their nutrition and, as a result, their resilience to diseases. These can be addressed by improved targeting of nutrition programmes at influencing determinants that are amenable to change, such as food security, women's employment or nutrition knowledge (Seth, 1997).

Safe food for everyone (BN3)

This PPA supports Members in developing an enabling environment to ensure safe food for all, with a food-systems approach. There can be no food security nor good nutrition when food is not safe. An effective strategy for improving food safety would be to involve more women, as producers, processors, traders, food-safety professionals and consumers, in identifying protocols for ensuring food safety at the production, processing, packaging, storage and transportation levels, and monitor that these protocols are being implemented and followed. Providing women with platforms and opportunities for networking and monitoring of food safety will also help improve nutrition in the region.

Reducing food loss and waste (BN4)

Reducing food loss and waste is a priority for FAO given their impacts on climate change, food security and nutrition. FAO prepared the Regional Strategy on Food Loss and Waste Reduction in Asia and the Pacific (Bennett *et al.*, 2022), and is also promoting the new FAO Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction (FAO, 2021g). Women play a significant role in post-harvest and food preservation for home consumption as well as marketing. Promoting women's meaningful participation in the roll-out of the food loss and waste strategy in the region will be an important first step to achieving its objectives. Including better storage and processing facilities at family and community level, supporting and exchanging knowledge on market options (e.g. through digitalization) for dried, processed or prepared agricultural and food products would help save food before it is lost or wasted and generate sustainable jobs and employment for smallholders and women in particular.



3.2 Regional Priority 2: Accelerating sustainable natural resources management for biodiversity conservation and climate action

Under this regional priority, FAO supports Members to protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and combat climate change, thereby realizing more efficient, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems. It does this through four PPAs:

- Climate-change mitigating and adapted agrifood systems (BE1)
- Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture (BE3)
- Achieving sustainable urban food systems (BE4)
- Resilient agrifood systems (BL4)

A gender perspective to these PPAs will allow for greater participation and acknowledgement of women's roles in building resilient, community-based agricultural practices. These efforts will also enable communities to cope better with existing and future risks from pandemics, disasters and climatic impacts.

Climate-change mitigating and adapted agrifood systems (BE1)

This PPA will support Members, especially LDCs, to strategize and develop proposals to access finance and achieve their climate ambitions in agriculture, forestry and other land-use sectors. Effective approaches include expanding knowledge on gender-differentiated impacts of climate change in agriculture; developing and applying tools to enable the uptake of gender-responsive climate-resilient and labour-saving agricultural practices; mainstreaming gender in climate-change adaptation planning for agriculture; and gender integration in national adaptation programmes, nationally determined contributions and climate-finance portfolios. Mobilizing climate finance will help create benefits for marginalized farmers, including women. Given the impacts of COVID-19, it will be crucial to link social protection with climate-change adaptation.

Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture (BE3)

This PPA will address ecosystem restoration and sustainable use of marine, terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems and their ecosystem services. It will enable Members to enhance women's and men's participation to create good practices for ecosystem and landscape restoration, sustainable forest management, sustainable land, soil and water management and the sustainable use of biodiversity. BE3 will build on women's local knowledge and systems of energy use, especially from livestock and forest use, while providing renewable energy sources will help create sustainable solutions. Systematic collection and use of sex- and age-disaggregated data will help monitor gendered impacts and identify clearly the contribution of men and women.

Achieving sustainable urban food systems (BE4)

This PPA will promote and build capacities for efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable approaches to agrifood system transformation. These will include promotion of the use of kitchen gardens by women to provide them with access to affordable and healthy diets locally and will include men and children as stakeholders.

Resilient agrifood systems (BL4)

This PPA ensures that transformation of agrifood systems is risk-informed and more resilient to shocks and stresses, including natural disasters and pandemics such as COVID-19. It will adopt innovative and cost-effective measures aimed at providing social protection to reduce vulnerabilities, particularly of women, Indigenous Peoples and socially marginalized smallholders, and at addressing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. BL4 will aim at reducing damage to or disruption of lives and enable better coping strategies for women and men. For example, both women and men will participate in emergency preparedness and response interventions and have access to early or timely warning of extreme weather events and alternate plans for food production.

FAO RAP will help countries to apply gender mainstreaming as an effective strategy for achieving disaster risk reduction (DRR) and mitigating postdisaster gender disparity. This will include setting up effective communication for promoting prevention measures, including digital dashboards in disaster-prone areas, standardized communication systems for authentic information dissemination and DRR committees led by women (see Annex 2).

3.3 Regional Priority 3: Supporting inclusive rural transformation for sustainable agrifood systems and equitable rural societies

FAO is committed to inclusive rural transformation, including economic growth and support to vulnerable populations to reduce inequality, leaving no country and no person behind. This priority area will be addressed through four PPAs:

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- Digital agriculture (BP5)
 - Gender equality and rural women's empowerment (BL1)
 - Inclusive rural transformation (BL2)
 - The Hand-in-Hand initiative (BL5)
-

Digital agriculture (BP5)

Digital agriculture is an important area of work for FAO and Members in this biennium (2022–2023) and will render other PPAs more effective. Increasing women's participation and decision-making in digital transformation as well as improving women's access to digital resources and services will empower them in their work in primary production and processing and allow them to reach online markets. It is also an important element in the larger framework of gender equality and technology and this RP will take strategic steps in the direction.

Under the 1000 Digital Villages Initiative (DVI) in the region, FAO and Members are developing an integrated framework to promote the uptake of digital services relevant to rural end users' needs and capacities. In order to close the gender digital divide in the region, countries will have to ensure women's participation in decision-making and invest in building women's access to information and communication technology (ICT) and their skills to use these technologies for networking, production, marketing and financing. They will also have to promote opportunities for setting up small agrifood business and having access to livelihoods with dignity. The need to empower and enhance capacities of farmer organizations, women and youth associations and micro, small and medium enterprises platforms will be key to sustain the momentum of transformation in rural areas.

Gender equality and rural women's empowerment (BL1)

This PPA is crucial for Members to promote the uptake of gender-transformative approaches in agrifood systems. A core element of this PPA will be efforts to ensuring equal access to productive resources, innovations and solutions as well as training, upskilling, education and finances to meet rural women's and girls' needs and priorities, while improving their quality of life. This work will promote rural women's economic empowerment and their equal rights as well as enhance women's voice, leadership and decision-making in rural institutions and organizations in order to ensure better life for women and girls in the region.

FAO will strengthen its partnership in Asia and the Pacific in the area of gender equality, including in the empowerment of women and youth organizations to engage in responsible agricultural investments and gender mainstreaming in the work of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on rural development and poverty eradication, and to promote the design and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programmes and transformative interventions (see Annex 2).

Inclusive rural transformation (BL2)

This PPA will specifically target the needs of rural people (women, youth, small-scale producers, family farmers, Indigenous Peoples and poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups) with the principle of leaving no one behind. It will ensure affordable and equitable access to targeted policies and programmes for poor and vulnerable rural communities, especially women and girls. The work places a specific emphasis on young women and men as the key to the future of agrifood systems and vibrant rural areas in countries at all levels of economic development. In doing so, it will encourage their participation in agrifood systems and rural institutions, support education and vocational training and boost decent employment opportunities both on- and off-farm to revitalize rural areas.

The Hand-in-Hand initiative (BL5)

This PPA uses a flagship geospatial analytical platform and partnership modality to enhance Members' collaboration with international financing institutions (IFIs), major donors, the private sector and civil society. FAO will also advocate with IFIs and major donors to have supportive policies and programmes that prioritize women having control over land and other natural resources and stop seeing them only as "beneficiaries". FAO will ensure that gender aspects are mainstreamed in Hand-in-Hand programmes in selected countries in the region. Recognizing the impacts of COVID-19 and other shocks, particularly on poverty and hunger of vulnerable territories and populations, resilience will also be integrated into targeting and entry points of most Hand-in-Hand programme investment plans in Asia and the Pacific.

3.4. Regional Priority 4: Building sustainable and resilient agrifood systems in the Pacific small island developing states

FAO's work in the Pacific SIDS will place strong emphasis on building sustainable and resilient agrifood systems, in line with the agrifood systems transformation pathways developed by Members. This will be done through the implementation of the current Multi-Country Programming Framework for the Pacific islands 2018–2022, which covers 14 countries in the Pacific. Gender issues are mainstreamed in the CPF in line with the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (FAO, 2017b). This regional priority includes nine PPAs:

- Blue transformation (BP2)
- One Health (BP3)
- Small-scale producers' equitable access to resources (BP4)
- Digital agriculture (BP5)
- Healthy diets for all (BN1)
- Safe food for everyone (BN3)
- Climate-change mitigating and adapted agrifood systems (BE1)
- Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture (BE3)
- Resilient agrifood systems (BL4)



Blue transformation (BP2)

Given the large number of women engaged in fisheries sector in the Asia and the Pacific region, especially in the Pacific SIDS, FAO will work with country programmes to identify specific needs of women and the constraints they face. It will do this through gender analysis and by providing innovative and supportive mechanisms that can improve sustainability through transformation or processing and market access, especially using ICTs. Better production in the fisheries sector will enable dignified livelihoods for the large numbers of women engaged in this sector across the region.

One Health (BP3)

Gender mainstreaming in this Pacific SIDS regional priority will require having more women specialists in livestock and human health, including women veterinarians, and informing women of the risks of the products being used. It will also tap into women's local and Indigenous knowledge of handling animal and plant pests and diseases, including the use of traditional practices, so that they can achieve better production outcomes.

Small-scale producers' equitable access to resources (BP4)

FAO will encourage assessment of women's vulnerabilities and risks at the country level to build resilient food systems and livelihoods. This will be particularly significant in the sector of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, agriculture and agroforestry where women make significant contributions in the Pacific SIDS. FAO will identify women's contributions in aquaculture and fisheries and strengthen sex- and age-disaggregated data systems in SIDS. It will also promote women's knowledge in production and processing in marine systems and in managing food security and enable women's entrepreneurship at the local level.

Digital agriculture (BP5)

The SIDS Solutions Platform will be used to assist Members to enhance women's access to market opportunities, productivity enhancements and resilience through the development of accessible ICT technologies and to promote knowledge sharing and cooperation, building on prior work on gender implications for innovation and digitalization (FAO, 2021a). FAO will also work to develop women's capacities to access up-to-date technical, meteorological and market information that will assist them in strengthening agrifood systems.

Healthy diets for all (BN1)

As primary caregivers women are most affected by the rapid rise in non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease and triple burden of malnutrition (undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and obesity) affecting Pacific SIDS. FAO will assist Members to raise awareness of the importance of producing and consuming fresh, safe, nutritious and healthy food to address these problems, in particular targeting women at the community level. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of a strong immune system in combating disease, and a key factor in maintaining a strong immune system is good nutrition and diets that are locally accessible and adaptable to natural and human-induced disasters.

Safe food for everyone (BN3)

Food safety is critical to ensuring better nutrition for women, children and their families. This PPA will aim at enhancing women and men's capacities for better and safer manufacturing, handling, packaging and hygiene practices. Inclusion of more women professionals in development of and checking food-safety protocols will be critical in the Pacific SIDS.

Climate-change mitigating and adapted agrifood systems (BE1)

This PPA will promote women’s and men’s roles in establishing and implementing climate-smart agriculture. It will assist Members in the Pacific SIDS to build women’s and men’s capacities in assessing risks of climatic impacts and to incorporate practices such as use of appropriate seeds, on-farm inputs, farm ponds, bunds, trenches, mulching and other practices to conserve soil moisture and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It will also enhance their access to and control over required water resources. Given that women already play significant roles in accessing forest-based food and medicinal resources, which are critical to buffer against climate change, FAO will assist Members to build women’s capacities and roles in forest monitoring.

Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture (BE3)

Women play important roles in ecosystem conservation and restoration and as biodiversity knowledge holders and protectors of nature. FAO will work with Members to enhance recognition of this and to promote development and uptake of innovative technologies, sustainable solutions and an enabling environment for “building back better” after the COVID-19 pandemic. This will serve as an entry point for applying Indigenous knowledge for sustainable natural resource management in the form of services for enhancement of the ecosystem, while building secure livelihoods for women and communities. Women’s knowledge and practices in natural composting and nutrient cycling for building ecosystem health and improving agricultural productivity will contribute to this PPA for a better environment.



Resilient agrifood systems (BL4)

Addressing the root causes of agrifood system vulnerabilities for both women and men and their communities and building the capacities of local institutions are essential to reduce impact of future shocks and enable affected populations to become more resilient and recover faster. This can be done by analysing gender issues in prevention and mitigation mechanisms as well as responses to emergencies and restoration efforts following natural disasters.

Building resilience of agrifood systems and livelihoods requires strengthening women’s key roles in ensuring food security of their families and communities. This is best achieved through gender-sensitive risk assessment and management of seasonal changes, climatic impacts and other natural and human-induced disasters. Women should be provided with seeds of crops and with tree seedlings to promote home-grown food production. Participation of women in development and management of local and national-level DRR strategies will be encouraged.

3.5 Increasing resilience of women and men to face the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need not only for responsive healthcare systems but also for gender-responsive strategies to pandemics. Through this focus area, FAO in the region will work towards a gender-responsive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and better preparedness for the future by ensuring continued food production by vulnerable populations, in particular women, and supporting alternative income-generating activities, with a focus on women producers (FAO, 2020e).

FAO urges that particular attention be paid to women who hold a central role in food supply chains and food processing and associated industries and to potential impacts on lactating mothers, with increased child mortality and stunted growth (FAO, 2020e). While the regional trends discussed under section 2.2 indicate the pandemic has had a greater impact on the well-being of women than on men, there is insufficient sex-disaggregated data to understand the nature and level of impacts in agriculture and rural development sectors. This includes a lack of understanding of women's access to and benefit from social protection, emergency support and other policy instruments used for responding to the pandemic.

It is essential that FAO works at the regional and country levels to address the vulnerabilities of women and girls as they cope with heightened food insecurity and malnutrition; loss of livelihoods; lack of voice and participation in the design and implementation of response and mitigation strategies; and increased work burdens in the productive, reproductive and community spaces. These efforts will aim at generating awareness and recognition of changes in gender roles and the need to empower women with greater access to, and control over, natural and productive resources. This will contribute to better preparedness to face future pandemics. Along with a gender analysis of COVID-19 impacts in the agriculture, forestry, livestock, aquaculture and fisheries sectors, countries will be encouraged to develop gender-responsive measures and robust gender-sensitive monitoring and reporting frameworks as part of their build-back and recovery strategies.



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4 Main focus areas on gender equality and women's empowerment for 2022–25

Gender plays a crucial role in FAO's new Strategic Framework 2022–31 (FAO, 2021b), both as a cross-cutting theme across all PPAs, and as a stand-alone PPA on gender equality and rural women's empowerment (BL1). In addition, a gender action plan (GAP) (FAO, 2021c) was developed in 2021 to highlight FAO's contribution to the objectives of the GEP 2020–2030 (FAO, 2020a) and its alignment with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31 (FAO, 2021h).

This regional gender strategy for Asia and the Pacific (2022–25) is aligned to FAO's new strategic framework and the corporate GAP, with a focus on taking forward the gains from the previous regional gender strategy (FAO, 2017a), bridging missing links and strengthening and creating resilience for the future. The RPs translate corporate strategies into concrete actions in the region.

For the period 2022–25, FAO RAP has identified five focus areas on gender equality and women's empowerment, drawing from FAO's RPs and corporate policies:

01
Enabling women to exercise voice and leadership for effective participation in governance

02
Increasing women's access to, and control over, natural and productive resources, services, markets, decent work and the resulting income and benefits

03
Facilitating technology transfer and innovation to reduce women's work burdens, and reducing digital divide

04
Mobilizing participation and support of men and women for gender-based transformation in agriculture and equitable distribution of responsibilities, including at household level

05
Enhancing gender mainstreaming across FAO's systems and structures

FAO will encourage countries in the region to specifically apply a gender and intersectional approach in agricultural and rural development efforts, recognizing also that inclusion of women does not imply exclusion of men, as men are an essential part of the solutions to the problems of gender inequality.

4.1. Enabling women to exercise voice and leadership for effective participation in governance

Women's participation and contribution in agriculture, livestock, forests and fisheries is significant despite all the challenges they face. By enhancing the social and economic development of women, we can transform the landscape of risks facing the region (UNESCAP, 2021).

Women's voice in decisions related to production and markets is important and linked to ownership; an essential prerequisite for gender equal stakes in the sectors of agriculture, livestock, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries. Gender-responsive actions to improve rural women's status within households and communities in Asia and the Pacific include mobilizing women to lobby and advocate for land rights; improving access to and control over financial resources and markets; and expanding women's membership in farmers' organizations and unions.

Moreover, it is crucial to improve representation of women's perspective and aspirations in decision-making bodies that formulate laws, policies and programmes for agriculture and rural development. FAO's work with policymakers can be further strengthened through formation of networks on gender equality in agriculture and food security at the country level.

Expected outputs

- Women's leadership and participation in business forums, trade and farmers' unions and other producer organizations are strengthened.
- FAO leverages capacities and multistakeholder engagement to expand women's contributions and opportunities in the agrifood sector for inclusive, efficient, sustainable and resilient food systems.
- Best practices in the region on gender-responsive, -sensitive and -transformative laws, planning, budgeting and investments in the agrifood sector are promoted among senior policymakers (including parliamentarians and others).
- A gender-responsive approach to COVID-19 recovery and building back is incorporated by FAO at subregional and country levels, leaving no one behind.

Action points

- Mobilize resources for strengthening the capacity of women leaders and supporting existing women's and farmers' organizations and networks.
- Provide technical assistance, capacity development and support mechanisms tailored to rural women as policymakers, leaders, producers, traders and entrepreneurs (in line with action point 1 on resource mobilization).
- Raise awareness of the importance of gender issues and strengthen capacity on gender equality and women's empowerment targeted to concerned ministries and local institutions (including advisory and financial services) to support the design and implementation of gender-responsive and gender-transformative policies, strategies, projects and other initiatives.
- Organize policy dialogues to discuss action for gender-responsive and inclusive food systems building on legislative, budgetary, oversight and local governance functions, such as those of parliamentarians.
- Consolidate support in line with existing country mechanisms and local committees established to respond to COVID-19 impacts and address gender concerns, including country-level gender experts and resource partners responsible for health, agriculture, livestock, forests and fisheries.

4.2 Increasing women's access to, and control over, natural and productive resources, services, markets, decent work and the resulting income and benefits

It is critical that women have access to, and control over, natural and productive resources such as land, water bodies, livestock and forests, access to services, technologies, finance, capacity-development opportunities and markets and involvement in decision-making in all areas affecting their livelihoods and well-being. Digital access will also be an important intervention in this area.

FAO is committed to decent farm and off-farm work for women and the opportunity for them to have dignified livelihoods and receive the rewards and benefits accruing from their labour. FAO recognizes that women need to be supported, especially in the face of triple work burden in the household, as producers and at community level, including unpaid care work. This requires ensuring that women have access to social protection in the form of cash transfers, microfinance and/or in-kind assistance for meeting food security and health needs and for setting up enterprises and businesses. Advocacy on women taking up occupations typically considered male jobs, such as management or mechanic, would enhance women's access to lucrative and stable job opportunities and skill sets on the path to gender equality.

Increased access to natural and productive resources alone does not necessarily bring equal benefits for women and men. It is essential to ensure that women also have the capacity to autonomously decide on the use and management of incomes. This implies challenging discriminatory social norms that often undermine women's position, from the household to the institutional level.

Expected outputs

- Greater acceptance and efforts made at country level to reform legal frameworks and policies that enable women to have more secure access to productive resources, services and markets.
- FAO projects, programmes and policy support increase opportunities for women to take leadership positions in society, to autonomously manage savings, land and other livelihood assets and take up non-traditional occupations and enhance access to markets and services by addressing mobility constraints, transportation restrictions and market disruptions.
- Budgets for activities that promote women's empowerment at the regional, subregional and country level to ensure that "no woman is left behind" are embedded at regional, subregional and country levels.

Action points

- Design and undertake a focused policy advocacy dialogue with key ministries and other relevant stakeholders to support the formulation of gender-responsive legal and regulatory reforms that secure equal access for women and marginalized sections of society to productive resources, services, technologies and information.
- Plan and facilitate a training programme to build institutional capacity on gender-sensitive land tenure governance and the implementation of the *Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security (FAO, 2022g)* at country level and the *Voluntary guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication (FAO, 2015)*.
- Invest in the technical and leadership skills of women and youth to support their entrepreneurship skills and income-generating activities, including the creation of and strengthening existing networking and learning platforms and opportunities for knowledge exchange.



4.3 Facilitating technology transfer and innovation to reduce women's work burdens, and reducing digital divide

FAO will facilitate the availability of new, women-friendly agricultural technologies, practices and infrastructure (including solar or renewable energy options) to enhance women's management of land and natural resources, improve their livelihoods and lessen their household and productive burdens. This will fulfil the regional priority of building sustainable agrifood systems to transform the agriculture sector and ensure social, economic and environmental benefits. This will be critical for ensuring decent work and dignified livelihoods for women.

Technology transfer and increasing women's access to advanced tools and technologies, which tend to be male dominated, will reduce drudgery and occupational hazards. Skilling and encouraging women to take up non-traditional livelihoods (commonly dominated by men) will contribute to breaking the gender division of labour and pave the way for changing gender roles.

Increasing women's access to existing ICTs is essential to reduce the gender-based digital divide and empower women to manage production and market supply chains (including the capacity to rent vehicles for transportation needs, machinery, storage spaces, get seed certification, etc.).

FAO will expand its existing work on gender and mechanization in the region, especially around the Green Innovation Centres in some countries (e.g. India and Viet Nam). Integrating gender perspectives in assessments and mechanization work of selected Green Innovation Centres will help generate lessons for wider adoption by men and women in the region.

Expected outputs

- Capacity development on labour-saving devices for women and cross-gender training (i.e. training encouraging men to work on women-specific roles and tasks and vice versa) initiated in the region.
- Projects that include promotion of women's access to digital resources and capacity development in the use of technology in agriculture, livestock management, fisheries and forestry work formulated and implemented at country level with FAO support.

Action points

- Strengthen the capacity of national and local institutions to provide gender-responsive advisory and financial services, including extension, advisory, social protection and financial services, to facilitate women's uptake of technologies and practices to reduce their drudgery.
- Collaborate with research institutions, resource partners, private sector, international and national NGOs and organizations to support the adoption of promising practices and innovations in women-friendly labour-saving and climate-smart technologies.
- Establish partnerships with ICT providers to enable more women and girls to access mobile and data-based ICTs to bridge the gender-based digital divide.

4.4 Mobilizing participation and support of men and women for gender-based transformation in agriculture and equitable distribution of responsibilities, including at household level

There is a predominant view in many countries in the Asia and the Pacific region that gender-based transformation favours only women and may adversely affect men. For example, male farmers believe that, if women are granted equal rights to land, water and forests, men might lose control over such resources. Giving priorities and opportunities to female farmers and workers has often manifested in increased violence against women.

FAO's Members are expected to work with both men and women in order to mainstream gender-equality perspectives in attitudes, behaviours and practices at the sectoral and institutional level. These efforts should aim at sensitizing men to better understand how egalitarian norms would actually benefit both men and women as well as society at large.

It will only be possible to address women's work burden and the gendered division of labour if gender and social norms are addressed and gender-transformative approaches are adopted. To break out of the traditional gender division of labour, men will have to support women in productive and domestic work. Whereas much focus has been put on cross-gender inputs and capacity development with women, the same has not been done with men in the areas of household care work areas or occupationally (see Annex 2).

Expected outputs

- Both women and men are equally included in FAO projects, programmes, gender awareness and capacity-building trainings, as relevant.
- Farmer Field Schools and relevant women-targeted interventions are supported by FAO in country-level projects as a participatory and inclusive approach to engage both men and women in a learning-by-doing environment.

Action points

- Increase collaborations or work in partnership with organizations and institutions to actively involve men in gender-transformative work.
- Disseminate Farmer Field Schools, Farmer Business Schools and Women's Empowerment Farmer Business Schools to strengthen the technical capacity and life skills of female and male farmers.
- Organize gender awareness-raising and training workshops on gender equality and gender-transformative approaches to support the redistribution of tasks within the household and communities and eliminate negative social norms and discrimination.



4.5 Enhancing gender mainstreaming across FAO's systems and structures

FAO is committed to institutionalizing gender perspectives across all its operations and organizational structures at the regional, subregional and country level. This is expected to result in better integration of gender aspects in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation work in the region.

The RAP regional office has made significant progress in mainstreaming gender aspects by including gender equality and women's empowerment perspectives in country programming frameworks (CPFs), initiating country gender assessments (CGAs), using findings of CGAs to improve programme design in key areas of the FAO mandate and reporting gender-related work through country annual reporting.

However, the online survey carried out to develop this regional gender strategy for Asia and the Pacific and the desk review of CGAs and stocktaking reports highlighted the following challenges:

- GFPs are either not appointed at the appropriate level or have multiple responsibilities, making it difficult for them to focus on the gender mainstreaming work.
- Budgets are insufficient for meeting gender-equality agendas, such as sensitization, capacity building and gender needs assessments for each project.
- There are too few programmes with women-specific interventions.
- There are difficulties, delays and gaps in getting sex-disaggregated data from projects or government partners, which limits the scope for monitoring and evaluation.

Expected outputs

- Gender diverse and inclusive teams with representation of women, men and other genders (across social groups) formed in country and subregional offices.
- Gender-related knowledge and capacity of staff enhanced in all FAO offices at the regional, subregional and country level.
- Gender-responsive budgets developed and embedded at regional, subregional and country levels to support interventions for gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Number of programmes or projects targeting gender equality or women's empowerment increased across all countries in Asia and the Pacific region.

Action points

- Produce and disseminate gender-responsive communication materials to support women's empowerment, highlighting women's roles, work burden and gender-related barriers in the rural and agriculture sectors and what FAO is doing to address these inequalities.
- Organize annual meetings with GFPs and other key colleagues in Asia and the Pacific for sharing experiences, challenges, good practices and opportunities.
- Take tangible steps to ensure that gender-related objectives and indicators are integrated in the results frameworks of the CPF and relevant annual and biennial workplans.
- Take tangible steps to ensure that gender-equality issues are addressed in all programme and project planning and implementation and relevant reporting activities to increase women-specific interventions.
- All employees undertake mandatory gender training to acquire an understanding of gender issues related to FAO's mandate.
- Every country office carries out a gender stocktaking exercise, if not done in the past 4 years, to assess the extent to which gender is integrated in their work and develops a plan of action to address the identified gaps, set priorities and allocate resources for gender mainstreaming at office level.
- Every country office carries out a country gender assessment, if not done in the past 4 years.

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Annex

Annex 1: Action plan

Focus areas	Activities	Responsibilities	Date
01 Enabling women to exercise voice for effective participation in governance	1. Mobilize resources for strengthening the capacity of women leaders and supporting existing women's and farmers' organizations and networks.	FAORs, with support from GFPs and RAP	By the end of 2022
	2. Provide technical assistance, capacity development and support mechanisms tailored to rural women as policymakers, leaders, producers, traders and entrepreneurs (in line with action point 1 on resource mobilization).	FAORs, with support from country office staff, GFPs and technical staff	By the end of 2022
	3. Raise awareness of the importance of gender issues and strengthen capacity on gender equality and women's empowerment targeted to concerned ministries and local institutions (including advisory and financial services) to support the design and implementation of gender-responsive and gender-transformative policies, strategies, projects and other initiatives.	FAORs, with support from GFPs and Gender Officer at RAP	By the end of 2022
	4. Organize policy dialogues to discuss action for gender-responsive and inclusive food systems building on legislative, budgetary, oversight and local governance functions, such as those of parliamentarians.	FAORs, with contribution from GFPs and country office staff RAP Gender Officer	2022/2023
	5. Consolidate support in line with existing country mechanisms and local committees established to respond to COVID-19 impacts and address gender concerns, including country-level gender experts and resource partners responsible for health, agriculture, livestock, forests and fisheries	FAORs, with contribution from GFPs and country office staff	2022/2023
02 Increasing women's access to, and control over natural and productive resources, services, markets, decent work and resulting income and benefits	1. Design and undertake a focused policy advocacy dialogue with key ministries and other relevant stakeholders to support the formulation of gender-responsive legal and regulatory reforms that secure equal access for women and marginalized sections of society to productive resources, services, technologies and information.	FAORs and GFPs, with support from the RAP Gender Officer or Gender Team at FAO headquarters	By June 2023
	2. Plan and facilitate a training programme to build the institutional capacity on gender-sensitive land tenure governance and the implementation of the <i>Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenures at country level and Voluntary guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries</i> .		
	3. Invest in the technical and leadership skills of women and youth to support their entrepreneurship skills and income-generating activities including the creation of and strengthening existing networking and learning platforms and opportunities for knowledge exchange.		

Focus areas	Activities	Responsibilities	Date
03 Facilitating technology transfer and innovation to reduce women's work burdens, and reducing digital divide	1. Strengthen the capacity of national and local institutions to provide gender-responsive advisory and financial services, including extension, advisory, social protection and financial services, to facilitate women's uptake of technologies and practices to reduce their drudgery.	Regional, subregional and country offices with support from GFPs and Gender Officer at RAP	2023
	2. Collaborate with research institutions, resource partners, private sector, international and national NGOs and organizations, to support the adoption of promising practices and innovations in women-friendly labour-saving and climate-smart technologies.	Regional, subregional and country offices with support from GFPs and RAP Gender Officer	By June 2023
	3. Establish partnerships with ICT providers to enable more women and girls to access mobile and data-based ICTs to bridge the gender-based digital divide.	FAO Country offices	By the end of 2022
04 Mobilizing participation and support of men and women for gender-based transformation in agriculture and equitable distribution of responsibilities, including at household level	1. Increase collaborations or work in partnership with organizations and institutions to actively involve men in gender-transformative work.	FAORs with GFPs	2022/2023
	2. Disseminate Farmer Field Schools, Farmer Business Schools and Women's Empowerment Farmer Business Schools to strengthen the technical capacity and life skills of female and male farmers.	FAORs with support from GFPs and Gender officer at RAP	2022/2023
	3. Organize gender awareness-raising and training workshops on gender equality and gender-transformative approaches to support the redistribution of tasks within the household and communities, and eliminate negative social norms and discrimination.	GFPs with support from Gender Officer at RAP and FAORs	2022/2023
05 Enhancing gender mainstreaming across FAO's systems and structures	1. Produce and disseminate gender-responsive communication materials to support women's empowerment, highlighting women's key roles, work burden and gender-related barriers in the rural and agriculture sectors and what FAO is doing to address these inequalities.	RAP Gender Officer in collaboration with GFPs or Gender team at FAO headquarters	By the end of 2022
	2. Organize annual meetings with GFPs and other key colleagues in Asia and the Pacific for sharing experiences, challenges, good practices and opportunities.	RAP Gender Officer, FAORs/GFPs	
	3. Take tangible steps to ensure that gender-related objectives and indicators are integrated in the results frameworks of the CPF and relevant annual and biennial workplans.	FAORs with GFPs	(continuous)
	4. Take tangible steps to ensure that gender-equality issues are addressed in all programme and project planning, implementation and relevant reporting activities so to increase women-specific interventions.		
	5. All employees undertake mandatory gender training to acquire an understanding of gender issues related to FAO's mandate.		
	6. Every country office carries out a gender stocktaking exercise, if not done in the past 4 years, to assess the extent to which gender is integrated in their work and develops a plan of action to address the identified gaps, set priorities and allocate resources for gender mainstreaming at office level.		
	7. Every country office carries out a country gender assessment, if not done in the past 4 years.		

Annex 2: Action and outreach plan

The following matrix shows how FAO intends to reach out to different stakeholders and partners through activities proposed under the action plan (Annex 1) in order to further clarify what actually should be done. There are six broad categories for this action and outreach plan: i) resource mobilization; ii) awareness raising; iii) advocacy; iv) capacity development; v) partnership/collaboration; and vi) communication.

The implementation of these activities should be monitored by the responsible officers identified in the action plan (Annex 1). Some activities from the action plan (Annex 1) that are directly related to the implementation of the corporate Policy on Gender Equality are not included as part of this plan because they should be monitored separately.

It is recommended that each country/subregional office of FAO in the region develop its own plan by following and further elaborating on this plan.

Activity type	Focus area	Activities	Targets to be reached out to	Indicators
Resource mobilization	1	1. Mobilize resources for strengthening the capacity of women leaders and supporting existing women's and farmers' organizations and networks.	Donors, Member States and other partners	Resources allocated to gender are increased.
Awareness raising	1	3. Raise awareness of the importance of gender issues and strengthen capacity on gender equality and women's empowerment targeted to concerned ministries and local institutions (including advisory and financial services) to support the design and implementation of gender-responsive and gender-transformative policies, strategies, projects and other initiatives.	Ministries and local institutions	Gender-responsive and gender-transformative policies, strategies, projects and other initiatives designed and implemented.
Advocacy	1	4. Organize policy dialogues to discuss action for gender-responsive and inclusive food systems building on legislative, budgetary, oversight and local governance functions, such as those of parliamentarians.	Ministries, policymakers and other stakeholders	Policy dialogues organized with policymakers and other stakeholders.
	2	1. Design and undertake a focused policy advocacy dialogue with key ministries and other relevant stakeholders to support the formulation of gender-responsive legal and regulatory reforms that secure equal access for women and marginalized sections of society to productive resources, services, technologies and information.		Actions taken by policymakers to promote gender-responsive and inclusive food systems. Gender-responsive legal and regulatory reforms formulated and implemented.

Activity type	Focus area	Activities	Targets to be reached out to	Indicators
Capacity development	1	2. Provide technical assistance, capacity development and support mechanisms tailored to rural women as policymakers, leaders, producers, traders and entrepreneurs.	Stakeholders (e.g. national and local institutions), including women farmers and entrepreneurs	Stakeholders (e.g. national and local institutions) receive training and capacity development opportunities. Knowledge of the relevant stakeholders on gender-responsive and gender-transformative approaches enhanced. Actions taken by relevant stakeholders to promote gender equality/ women's empowerment.
	2	2. Plan and facilitate a training programme to build the institutional capacity on gender-sensitive land tenure governance and the implementation of the <i>Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenures at country level and Voluntary guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries</i> . 3. Invest in the technical and leadership skills of women and youth to support their entrepreneurship skills and income-generating activities including the creation of and strengthening existing networking and learning platforms and opportunities for knowledge exchange.		
	3	1. Strengthen the capacity of national and local institutions to provide gender-responsive advisory and financial services, including extension, advisory, social protection and financial services, to facilitate women's uptake of technologies and practices to reduce their drudgery.		
	4	2. Disseminate Farmer Field Schools, Farmer Business Schools and Women's Empowerment Farmer Business Schools to strengthen the technical capacity and life skills of female and male farmers. 3. Organize gender awareness-raising and training workshops on gender equality and gender-transformative approaches to support the redistribution of tasks within the household and communities, and eliminate negative social norms and discrimination.		
	5	2. Organize annual meetings with GFPs and other key colleagues in Asia and the Pacific for sharing experiences, challenges, good practices and opportunities. 5. All employees undertake mandatory gender training to acquire an understanding of gender issues related to FAO's mandate.		
Capacity development (internal)			FAO staff	FAO staff receive training and capacity development opportunities. Knowledge of FAO staff on gender mainstreaming enhanced. Gender mainstreaming is implemented not only by GFPs but also by other staff in their areas of work.

Activity type	Focus area	Activities	Targets to be reached out to	Indicators
Partnership/ collaboration	1	5. Consolidate support in line with existing country mechanisms and local committees established to respond to COVID-19 impacts and address gender concerns, including country-level gender experts and resource partners responsible for health, agriculture, livestock, forests and fisheries.	Relevant stakeholders (research institutions, resource partners, private sector, international and national NGOs, etc.)	Relevant stakeholders reached out to for support and collaboration.
	3	2. Collaborate with research institutions, resource partners, private sector, international and national NGOs and organizations , to support the adoption of promising practices and innovations in women-friendly labour-saving and climate-smart technologies. 3. Establish partnerships with ICT providers to enable more women and girls to access mobile and data-based ICTs to bridge the gender-based digital divide.		Partnership/ collaboration obtained with relevant stakeholders to promote gender equality/ women's empowerment.
	4	1. Increase collaborations or work in partnership with organizations and institutions to actively involve men in gender-transformative work.		
	5	1. Produce and disseminate gender-responsive communication materials to support women's empowerment, highlighting women's key roles, work burden and gender-related barriers in the rural and agriculture sectors and what FAO is doing to address these inequalities.		FAO staff The public
Communication				

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Bangkok, Thailand