



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Office of the
Inspector General

Audit of governance arrangements in support of FAO's custodianship role for the Sustainable Development Goal indicators



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19 April 2024

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with its biennial audit workplan, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) carried out an audit of governance arrangements in support of FAO's custodianship role for the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators. The audit focused on assessing the extent to which governance arrangements (including the definition of roles, authority and accountability); coordination processes; and capacity and resources support FAO's custodianship role for the SDG indicators. Overall responsibility for the role rested with the former Office of the Chief Statistician (until the end of 2023) and with the Statistics Division (ESS) from 2024. The audit covered the period between January 2019 and September 2023.

WHY IT MATTERS?

FAO is a custodian agency for 21 SDG indicators (about 10 percent of all unique SDG indicators) grouped under 6 SDGs. The indicators and the custodian role are central to the effectiveness and success of the SDGs, ensuring that progress is measured, understood and acted upon in a coordinated and effective manner.

WHAT WERE THE KEY OBSERVATIONS?

As regards governance arrangements, the audit found that roles, authority and accountability for the custodian role were clearly articulated, and a robust and effective quality assurance programme was in place. Accordingly, individuals/units were held accountable for their contributions, and individual and unit performance was managed.

With respect to coordination processes, an Inter-Departmental Working Group was created to coordinate the activities of all the FAO technical units tasked with the collection, compilation, storage or dissemination of statistics related to the SDG indicators. Accordingly, coordination processes were successfully supporting work across the Organization. Their effectiveness was traced, documented and improved on a continuous basis.

Capacity and resource needs had been assessed by the Office of the Chief Statistician but irregular and late funding allocations, coupled with the unpredictability of extrabudgetary resources, hindered long-term planning and the sustainability of initiatives. This undermined FAO's capacity to implement activities efficiently. Improved budgetary planning would address this concern.

CONCLUSION

Relevant structures, policies and procedures are in place and operating as intended. Opportunities for improvement, if any, do not hinder the achievement of the established governance, risk management and internal control objectives. The audit identified one high-risk issue.

ESS management has developed a suitable action plan to address the issue raised, and OIG will follow up on its timely implementation.

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Inspector General
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