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Update on IFAD's Approach to Address the United Nations Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

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For: Review

Update on IFAD's Approach to Address the United Nations Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

I. Introduction

1. In response to the United Nations Secretary-General's strategy for a system-wide approach to strengthening prevention and response measures to combat sexual harassment (SH) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in its operations and funded activities, the IFAD SH/SEA task force, led by the Director of the Ethics Office (ETH) and composed of representatives of the Office of the General Counsel, Human Resources Division, Office of Audit and Oversight (AUO), Communications Division, Programme Management Department and Corporate Services Department reported to the Executive Board at its 123rd, 124th, 125th, 126th and 127th sessions¹ on the implementation of IFAD's Action Plan and the concrete measures being taken to align IFAD with the Secretary-General's strategy as described in the report Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A New Approach (A/71/818).
2. The development of an action plan in response to the Secretary-General's strategy to improve the United Nations response to SEA is among the commitments and monitorable actions included in the Report of the Consultation on the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources.²
3. Information documents were presented at the above-mentioned Board sessions on the comprehensive approach developed and measures implemented to align IFAD with the strategy. An update on all actions and initiatives taken by IFAD under the action plan to prevent and respond to SH and SEA is provided in the annex. The Board welcomed the Fund's continued leadership and transparency, including the updates to the Board.
4. Since the release of the IFAD Policy on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SH/SEA Policy) in April 2018, policies and procedures have been strengthened, and awareness-raising and training sessions have been conducted in all regions where the Fund operates. To ensure wide dissemination, the SH/SEA Policy is available on the corporate website in all four official languages of the Fund.
5. IFAD is committed to the United Nations collective efforts to combat SEA. An end-of-year management letter on protection from SEA and reporting SEA allegations was sent to the United Nations Secretary-General in January 2019. Subsequently, in April 2019, IFAD's 2018-2019 Action Plan to prevent and respond to SEA was shared with the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to SEA.

II. Update on IFAD's approach to prevent and respond to SH and SEA

A. Prevention and response

6. Consistent with its strong commitment to providing a safe working environment that is free from harassment, discrimination and abuse, IFAD continues to prioritize prevention and response efforts.
7. With the launch of IFAD's mandatory online ethics training module on SEA in 2018 and through the delivery of training and awareness-raising sessions in a classroom setting by the Ethics Office through IFAD's Operations Academy, regional events and workshops, the awareness of approximately 1,390 staff and partners has been

¹ See EB 2018/123/R.39, EB 2018/124/R.41, EB 2018/125/R.14, EB 2019/126/R.39 and EB 2019/127/R.42.

² See GC 41/L.3/Rev.1: paragraph 95(e), third bullet point; and annex I, monitorable action 48.

raised on SH and SEA. In the course of 2019, the Ethics Office has held SH and SEA awareness-raising sessions in Latin America and the Caribbean (Panama), East and Southern Africa (Nairobi) and West and Central Africa (Senegal and Ghana), reaching approximately 200 staff, consultants and partners. As of October 2019, 89 per cent of IFAD staff had completed the mandatory SEA online training. ETH will continue to monitor compliance with the support of Management and supervisors. A plan to roll out refresher sessions will be developed in 2020.

8. In June 2019, under the leadership of the Ethics Office and in collaboration with the IFAD Medical Services Unit; Environmental, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division; Human Resources Division (HRD); IFAD Staff Association; investigation section of the Office of Audit and Oversight; Security unit and Communications Division, IFAD launched its first SH/SEA awareness campaign entitled "Speak up, Report, Support" at headquarters and in the IFAD Country Offices (ICOs) and regional hubs. The campaign video was projected at the last Board session and is available on the corporate website and other public media tools.
9. In line with IFAD's SH/SEA Policy, Management recently released Guidelines to Prevent Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination at IFAD Events. The purpose of these guidelines, which are based on similar guidelines in the United Nations system, is to communicate in advance to participants the conduct expected at events organized or hosted by IFAD, and provide information on the mechanisms available for reporting and protection from retaliation. The guidelines are also available on IFAD's corporate website and are being included in invitations to IFAD-hosted events.
10. Prevention efforts have also been strengthened with IFAD's implementation of the SEA focal point programme. The Ethics Office designated 20 staff in ICOs and regional hubs as SEA focal points following a call for interest and selection process. SEA focal points work in all regions where IFAD has operations. In consultation with the Ethics Office, the role of the SEA focal point is to: improve and promote local prevention strategies; facilitate access to reporting and support at the field level; and liaise with other United Nations organizations in the field on SEA-related initiatives.
11. A training programme specifically for IFAD SEA focal points has been developed and administered by ETH. Focal points in all regions have undertaken the training programme. The SEA focal point programme will be supported by the Ethics Community Tool (ECT) being developed by the Information and Communications Technology Division in collaboration with ETH. The ECT is a confidential platform managed by ETH to connect all IFAD SEA focal points in all regions and offer opportunities to share experience and knowledge. The ECT will be completed by year-end and will be fully operational in 2020.
12. Publicly disclosed whistle-blower procedures – available in IFAD's four official languages – are in place to offer protection from retaliation to those who report concerns or suspicions of misconduct involving IFAD, including SH and SEA.
13. Support to SH/SEA victims and other affected persons can be sought in IFAD through various sources, such as: ETH, HRD, supervisors, the staff counsellor (who is a qualified psychologist) and IFAD's 20 SEA focal points in various countries. Support to project beneficiaries who are victims of SEA is provided through services, programmes and networks that operate in line with the General Assembly resolution on the United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel.

B. SH/SEA monitoring

14. In November 2018, IFAD began monitoring the impact of its SH/SEA prevention measures through the global staff survey. According to the results of the survey, 86 per cent of respondents have not witnessed SH in the workplace in the past two years. Of the 14 per cent remaining, 10 per cent of the responses were neutral and 4 per cent responded affirmatively. The same proportion of respondents (86 per cent) answered that they have not witnessed acts of SEA against beneficiaries of IFAD-funded projects. Of the 14 per cent remaining, 13 per cent were neutral and 1 per cent responded affirmatively. The survey results also indicated that 90 per cent of respondents know how to report unethical behaviours within IFAD.
15. Responding to a recommendation from the Board at its last session in September 2019, Management committed to stepping up efforts to make SH/SEA zero tolerance a living reality both at headquarters and in the field and, as part of these efforts, an in-depth survey will be conducted in early 2020. As suggested by the Board, IFAD has reached out to the World Food Programme (WFP) in order to learn from their recent survey experience.
16. IFAD also participated in the SEA survey carried out by the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to SEA in duty stations identified by the United Nations as at high risk for SEA. The results of the survey, which was conducted in June 2019 throughout the United Nations system, will be aggregated by the United Nations Secretariat and shared with participating organizations.
17. The Board has been regularly informed of all steps taken towards full implementation of the SH/SEA Policy and of important measures such as the strengthening of human resources procedures to ensure that incidents of SH and SEA can be reported confidentially and anonymously, with no time limitation; and the introduction of SH/SEA provisions into appointment letters and other IFAD contracts (including through amendments to IFAD's General Terms and Conditions for the Procurement of Goods and Services). Finally, the Board has been informed of the incorporation of ethical reputational risks, including those associated with SH and SEA, into IFAD's enterprise risk management taxonomy.
18. Management is committed to continue reporting credible SEA and SH allegations to the Executive Board and the Audit Committee, with due consideration to the obligation to respect privacy and the integrity of investigation processes. In addition, information on closed investigations of misconduct, including SH and SEA, is also disclosed in AUO's publicly available Annual Report on the IFAD Investigation and Anticorruption Activities.
19. In addition, on 18 October 2019, Management communicated its decision to the United Nations Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to SEA to contribute to the publicly disclosed Secretary-General Quarterly Report on SEA.
20. IFAD is committed to continuing monitoring its SH/SEA efforts through internal and external communications with staff and partners to ensure that all are aware and understand their roles and obligations in keeping IFAD free of SH and SEA.

C. Mainstreaming SH and SEA in IFAD's operations – Action plan update

21. Paramount to a successful strategy for preventing SH and SEA in IFAD's operations is the engagement of partners – including Member States, implementing partners and contractors – in sharing IFAD's standards and culture of zero tolerance for SH and SEA.

22. In December 2018, the Board approved amendments to the General Conditions for Agricultural Development Financing applicable to IFAD's financing agreements. As a result, recipients of IFAD funding are now required to inform IFAD of any non-compliance with the SH/SEA Policy in relation to IFAD-funded activities and operations. Non-compliance may trigger the suspension or cancellation of financing for failure to take timely and appropriate action in addressing the matter to the Fund's satisfaction.
23. At its December 2019 session, the Board will be requested to approve revised project procurement guidelines, including recent enhancements to project procurement oversight with respect to SH and SEA. In addition to the revised guidelines, certifications on SH and SEA compliance are being requested as part of the bidding documents and contracts with vendors, suppliers and other third parties receiving IFAD funds. Dedicated training sessions on the project procurement guidelines, including on SH and SEA requirements, are being rolled out for implementing partners. Compliance with IFAD requirements will be monitored during project supervision.
24. IFAD continues to strengthen its approach to identifying and addressing SH/SEA in its operations and funded activities. Gender-based violence, including SH and SEA, is an integral part of the screening process for categorizing new projects and assessing country strategies, as IFAD reviews all social assessment documentation prepared for projects and country strategic opportunities programme to ensure that they incorporate appropriate precautionary measures to identify, receive, remedy, monitor or report (proportionate to the risk level) any potential risk of occurrences of SH or SEA. This also covers reviews of project implementation manuals and environmental and social management plans. Compliance with requirements of IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) is monitored during project supervision. The SECAP are being strengthened to address gender-based violence, SH and SEA so that these risks can be assessed adequately and appropriate prevention and mitigation measures developed.
25. The engagement of implementing partners and contractors is critical for promoting IFAD's SH/SEA Policy standards and instilling a culture of zero tolerance for SH and SEA.
26. To this end, in collaboration with the West and Central Africa Division, ETH is developing an initiative to systematically include SH/SEA awareness-raising in all project start-up events in the region.

D. Collaboration and partnerships

27. IFAD continues to participate in the United Nations Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination Task Force on Sexual Harassment and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee results group on accountability and inclusion.
28. Through its participation in the CEB Task Force, IFAD continues its collaboration with the United Nations system to implement the agreed commitments and joint actions, including aligning its policies with those of the United Nations.
29. As part of that collaboration and in line with the recommendations of the CEB Task Force, Management has released Guidelines to Prevent Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination at IFAD Events (see para. 9). Management also decided to join the United Nations ClearCheck screening database, which is designed to avoid the hiring and re-hiring of individuals whose relationship with an organization of the system ended because of a determination that they had perpetrated sexual misconduct. The necessary steps are being taken to complete the registration process.
30. Finally, to ensure alignment with best practices for safeguarding against SH and SEA, IFAD collaborates with the Rome-based agencies (RBAs) and participates in

several ethics, human resources, legal and investigation networks of United Nations organizations and international financial institutions, and engages in knowledge-sharing and policy dialogue with many partners and stakeholders.

III. Conclusion

31. Since the introduction of the SH/SEA Policy in 2018, IFAD has demonstrated to its staff, all holders of IFAD contracts, its governing bodies, partners and stakeholders and the United Nations system, its strong commitment to prevent and combat SH and SEA inside and outside the organization in all aspects of its operations and activities through concrete actions.
32. Combatting SH/SEA in IFAD and in its funded operations and activities is a long-term commitment which calls for continuous efforts to fully implement a "speak up, report and support" culture. IFAD will continue to promote its zero tolerance policy and ensure that it is fully aligned with best safeguarding practices.

Action Plan – IFAD’s response to the Secretary-General’s strategy to improve the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse

	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Planned actions (2019)</i>
Strategic area I: Preventing SH and SEA			
IFAD Policy on Preventing and Responding to SH and SEA	Drafting and release of the Policy on SH/SEA.	Completed	
	Translation of the SH/SEA Policy into the Fund’s four languages and public disclosure on the IFAD intranet and website.	Completed	
SEA online training	Develop an IFAD-specific mandatory online training course in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.	Completed	
	Roll out the online SEA training.	Completed	Continue monitoring compliance
SH and SEA classroom training and awareness-raising sessions	<p>Training delivered by Ethics Office in classroom settings through the Operations Academy, regional events and workshops.</p> <p>10/04/2018 – WCA Regional Forum in Mauritania</p> <p>24-25/04/2018 – Operations Academy (headquarters)</p> <p>4/07/2018 – Operations Academy (headquarters)</p> <p>22/10/2018 – FMD Workshop in Indonesia</p> <p>24/10/2018 – APR Operations Academy in Indonesia</p> <p>14/11/2018 – NEN Regional event in Morocco</p> <p>23/1/2019 – ESA Operations Academy in Nairobi</p> <p>18/3/2019 – LAC Operations Academy in Panama</p> <p>24/6/2019 – WCA event in Senegal</p> <p>28/6/2019 – SH/SEA campaign in HQ and ICOs/Hubs</p> <p>18/7/2019 – SH/SEA campaign dedicated session with 4 ICOs/Hubs in LAC region (Panama, Peru, Brazil, Guatemala)</p> <p>09/07/2019 – OPR/WCA, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire Project Procurement Training (video conference)</p> <p>04/09/2019 - Training to OPR staff on procurement related to SH/SEA (video conference)</p> <p>09/09/2019 - WCA Workshop, Yaoundé, Cameroon, Project Procurement Training (video conference)</p> <p>16/09/2019 – WCA Workshop, Accra, Ghana, Project Procurement Training (video conference)</p> <p>23/09/2019 – FMD Workshop, Nairobi, Kenya, Project Procurement Training (video conference)</p>	Completed	Operations Academy in other regions- Completed
Anti-harassment online training course	Revise the current anti-harassment mandatory training to include specific references to SH and SEA.	Completed	

Background checks	Update personal history forms to include questions on SH and SEA. Introduce provisions on the human resources framework to withdraw offers of appointment or terminate appointments and other contracts in the presence of evidence of SH or SEA.	Completed	
	Explore the possibility of joining the United Nations common database project designed to maintain a record of individuals found to have engaged in SH.	Completed Registration steps with the UN ongoing	
Appointment letters and contract templates	Introduce a reference to IFAD's no-tolerance policy on SH and SEA in appointment letters and contract templates.	Completed	
Code of Conduct annual declaration form	Include a reference to SH and SEA in the annual declaration.	Completed	
General terms and conditions for procurement of goods and services	Include references to SH and SEA in commercial contracts (headquarters) in addition to the current references of the United Nations Supplier Code of Conduct.	Completed	
	Include obligations for commercial vendors to adopt background checks and disclosure requirements regarding criminal convictions, disciplinary measures, sanctions and investigations related to SH and SEA.	Completed	
Corporate risk register	Include reputational conduct-related risks such as SH and SEA in the corporate risk register to identify, monitor and prevent such risks.	Completed	
SH/SEA staff survey	Include SH and SEA questions in the Global Staff Survey to be launched in mid-November 2018.	Completed	
Strategic area II: Responding to SH and SEA			
Disciplinary framework	Identify SH and SEA as serious misconduct that may constitute grounds for summary dismissal, termination and debarment for non-staff.	Completed	
Reporting and complaint mechanisms	Clarify in relevant procedures that complaints of SH and SEA can be filed anonymously.	Completed	
	Remove the one-year limitation for reporting SH and SEA.	Completed	
	Ensure that dedicated AUO and Ethics Office reporting channels are accessible via IFAD's intranet and website.	Completed	
	Publicly disclose on IFAD's website the SH/SEA Policy, Code of Conduct and procedures on whistle-blowing protection against retaliation.	Completed	
SEA focal points	Identify SEA focal points within IFAD Country Offices and hubs.	Completed	
	Develop and administer a specific training programme for SEA focal points to receive allegations of SEA in IFAD Country Offices and hubs. 16/07/2019 – India, Vietnam 13/08/2019 – Brazil, Panama, Peru 21/08/2019 – Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, South Africa 19/09/2019 – Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Sudan 01/10/2019 – Indonesia 10/10/2019 – Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal	Completed	

Investigation	Give SH and SEA high priority for investigation.	Completed	
	SEA investigation training for AUO investigators.	Completed	
Strategic area III: Mainstreaming SH and SEA in IFAD's operations and funded activities			
SH and SEA risk assessment in operations	Include SH and SEA risk assessment in project design and implementation, and indicators in supervision missions.	Ongoing	
Project procurement guidelines	Include a reference to SH and SEA in the project procurement guidelines.	Completed	Will be submitted to the December session of the Executive Board in 2019.
General Conditions for Agricultural Development Financing (loans/grants)	Propose amendments to the Executive Board in December 2018 to include obligations to report SH and SEA, and associated measures.	Completed	
Strategic area IV: Coordination and cooperation			
Engagement with Ethics Network (United Nations and international and financial institutions [IFIs]) and RBAs	Participate in regular meetings of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (United Nations and IFIs) and RBAS.	Continuous	
	Explore the possibility of joining the WFP joint Member State/Management committee to review and discuss best practices in addressing forms of harassment including sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse.	Completed	
Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse	Participate in meetings of the Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse to discuss best practices in SEA awareness-raising and protection strategies for local beneficiary populations.	Continuous	
CEB SH Task Force	Participate in meetings of the CEB SH Task Force and explore the possibility of: joining the United Nations system-wide efforts to harmonize best practices for effective SH background checks; introducing a uniform definition of SH among United Nations organizations; and developing a model SH policy that organizations can use to align their own specific institutional and legal frameworks.	Ongoing	