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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

Note to Executive Board Representatives

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For: **Review**

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, 127th, 128th, 129th and 130th sessions[1] on the implementation of IFAD's SH/SEA Action Plan and the concrete measures being taken to align IFAD's approach with the Secretary-General's strategy as described in the report entitled Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A New Approach (A/71/818).[2]

2. Since the release of the IFAD policy on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (the SH/SEA policy) in April 2018, IFAD has implemented its 2018–2019 SH/SEA Action Plan (annex II); strengthened its policies and procedures, including the General Conditions for Agricultural Development Financing and the IFAD Project Procurement Guidelines; conducted awareness-raising events and a campaign to combat SH/SEA entitled "Speak Up, Report, Support"; developed a mandatory SH/SEA online training course; released the Guidelines to Prevent Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination at IFAD Events; and launched an SEA focal point programme in all regions where the Fund operates.

3. The 2020–2021 SH/SEA Action Plan (annex I) was shared with the Board and with the United Nations Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse. The plan focuses on collaboration with the United Nations and other partners in the field to strengthen prevention and response efforts, particularly in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

II. Update on IFAD's approach to preventing and responding to SH and SEA

A. Prevention and response

4. Since the most recent session of the Board in September, more than 500 staff, persons hired by the Fund under a non-staff contract and project personnel have received SH/SEA training either online or in videoconference classroom sessions. Training has been provided as part of project start-up events and procurement workshops in regions where IFAD has funded operations.

5. Mandatory online SEA training is being closely monitored by ETH and all new staff and non-staff must take the course within two months of starting their duties. To date, 98 per cent of the IFAD workforce has completed the mandatory SEA training. A refresher programme is being implemented by ETH, and re-certification of ethics training is required every three years of the last certification date.

6. Prevention efforts are also being deployed in the field through the IFAD SEA focal point programme. The focal points provide regular updates to ETH on their SEA awareness-raising activities at the local level with staff as well as with implementing partners and project personnel. Planned activities include the organization of an SEA awareness event for all ongoing projects in a given region.

7. SEA focal points collaborate with the United Nations country teams, Resident Coordinators and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security on issues

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[1] See EB 2018/123/R.39, EB 2018/124/R.41, EB 2018/125/R.14, EB 2019/126/R.39, EB 2019/127/R.42, EB 2019/128/R.51, EB 2019/129/R.5, EB 2020/130/R.4.
[2] See GC 41/L.3/Rev.1: para 95(e), third bullet point, and annex I, monitorable action 48.

relating to gender-based violence during the pandemic. They also contribute to local efforts, plans and strategies for providing protection against SEA.

8. Through the Ethics Community Tool, which is a dedicated SEA knowledge-sharing platform, ETH provides support to SEA focal points in the form of relevant materials in all the languages used by the Fund (e.g. booklets, Power Point presentations, videos, "no excuse" cards, SH/SEA question-and-answer sheets and United Nations awareness-raising resources, including a checklist on protection from SH/SEA during the COVID-19 pandemic).

9. Building on the past year's experience, IFAD participated in the 2020 United Nations SEA survey carried out by the Office of the Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse in duty stations identified by the United Nations as being at high risk of SEA. The survey closed on 31 July 2020, and the Board will be informed of its results, which are expected to be released before year's end, as soon as they become available.

10. As part of its commitment to contribute to United Nations efforts to combat SEA, IFAD joined the Secretary-General's real-time SEA tracking system, which provides information on SEA allegations involving United Nations workforce.

11. IFAD is committed to continue reporting credible SEA and SH allegations at each session of the Executive Board, with due consideration given to the obligation to respect the privacy and integrity of investigative processes. Since the September session of the Board, no credible SH/SEA allegations have been received from ETH or AUO's confidential helplines and email addresses or any of the 20 IFAD focal points posted in all regions where IFAD operates. Management is currently developing a system for promptly reporting any credible SH and SEA allegations received between Executive Board sessions to Member States. This mechanism will be a dedicated feature of the IFAD Member States Interactive Platform and should be completed by year-end.

12. IFAD joined the United Nation system-wide "ClearCheck" secure online database, which serves as a reference tool for screening applicants for sexual misconduct. This database will be populated with the names of individuals whose employment was terminated for sexual misconduct once the appeals time limits have been exhausted.

13. Following on from the survey on IFAD's workplace culture requested by the Board and conducted in December 2019, the workplace culture task force, led by "culture champions" from the Executive Management Committee, has been working to finalize an action plan for implementation in 2021. The task force engaged external experts to: (i) conduct a comprehensive document review of the survey results to date; (ii) re-examine key areas, particularly in light of events that have occurred since the last survey (e.g. COVID-19 and remote working); and (iii) re-engage IFAD colleagues in helping to identify the key behavioural shifts needed to affirm IFAD's values and strengthen IFAD's workplace culture.

14. In coordination with the workplace culture task force, these external experts completed consultations with leadership, staff, non-staff and the IFAD Staff Association and provided advice on a revised workplace culture action plan which is to be finalized by the end of the year. External expertise has also been used to support directors and others needing facilitation to discussing areas of workplace culture with their divisions. In addition, the task force has also revised its membership to include representatives from all Departments and IFAD's Country Offices.

B. Mainstreaming SH and SEA in IFAD's operations

15. During the pandemic, efforts have been made to reach out to IFAD's implementing partners through virtual platforms that are used to provide training courses on SH/SEA to project staff during the start-up of projects along with workshops on financial and procurement matters. This has enabled IFAD to continue to inform its partners about its SH/SEA zero tolerance stance and to remind them of the

obligations deriving from the fact that the SH/SEA policy has been fully embedded in the General Conditions for Agricultural Development Financing and the Project Implementation Guidelines.

16. The letter to borrowers/recipients that is sent to governments for all IFAD-funded projects, which contains instructions on financing, financial accountability and auditing arrangements, has been amended to refer to the SH/SEA policy and thus constitutes another notification to IFAD's partners of their obligations in this respect.

17. As provided for in the SH/SEA Action Plan, the Fund's revised Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) are being submitted to the Executive Board at its December session. The SECAP have been strengthened to address risks associated with gender-based violence, including SH and SEA, so that appropriate measures for mitigating those risks can be identified.

C. Collaboration and partnerships

18. IFAD recently joined and has participated in meetings of the United Nations working group on sexual exploitation and abuse under the leadership of the Office of the Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse. The Working Group spearheads priorities and strategic initiatives that can be developed and implemented across the United Nations system to combat SEA and serves as a knowledge-sharing mechanism. It also liaises with the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate.

19. IFAD continues to participate in the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment and has acted on its recommendations to join the ClearCheck database, to issue Guidelines to Prevent Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination at IFAD Events and to release a reference guide for managers that provides tips on how to listen to victims and support them. Finally, a review of IFAD's SH provisions to best align with the UN model SH policy is being conducted in collaboration with the Office of the General Counsel, HDR and AUO.

20. To ensure alignment with best practices for safeguarding against SH and SEA, in particular during the COVID-19 response and recovery, ETH is taking part in meetings of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Results Group on Accountability and Inclusion and continues its close collaboration with the Rome-based agencies on protection against SEA. All information and learning packages are disseminated to IFAD SEA focal points using the Ethics Community Tool.

21. In addition to its active participation in the United Nations system, IFAD contributes to the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations and to the international financial institutions (IFIs) network which is also committed to strengthening efforts to maintain advanced standards in the prevention of SH/SEA.

III. Conclusion

22. As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations have been delivering more of their work through virtual platforms as their physical presence in the field has been restricted. As a result, collaboration with the United Nations system, country teams, Resident Coordinators and government partners has proven to be of crucial importance in sharing knowledge on best prevention approaches and coordinating reporting mechanisms among United Nations country teams.

23. IFAD is committed to fully implementing all deliverables covered in the Action Plan and updating the Board accordingly.

2020-2021 Action Plan – IFAD's Policy to Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment (SH) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)

	Actions	Status	*Planned actions (2020-2021)*
Strategic area I: Preventing SH and SEA			
NEW IFAD Policy on Preventing and Responding to SH and SEA	Update the policy with the recent amendments to the General Conditions for Agriculture Development Financing and Project Procurement guidelines.	Ongoing	Q1 2021
SH and SEA training and awareness-raising	Monitor staff compliance to SEA online training course and roll-out mandatory refresher training programme.	Continuous	**Continuous**
	Strengthen further SH online training course module and roll-out mandatory refresher training programme.	Ongoing	**2021**
	Conclude Pilot with WCA on SEA training in Project Start-up workshops and take stock of lessons learned and challenges for adjustments as required.	Completed	
	NEW. Deploy SEA training in all languages for start-up workshops in all divisions (LAC, NEN, (ESA and WCA). 29 April 2020 – Start-up – Burkina Faso 6 May 2020 Start-up – Sierra Leone 18 June 2020 Start-up – Senegal 10 July 2020 Start-up – Sao Tome and Principe 3 August 2020 Start-up - Paraguay 13 August 2020 Start-up – Gabon **23 September 2020 Start-up – Cameroon** **6 October 2020 Start-up - Niger** **Planned 2021 Start-up – Tunisia** **23 November/11 December Start-up – Niger (Planned)**	On-going	2020-2021
	Deliver SH/SEA trainings in classroom settings and/or video conference through inter alia the Operations Academy, regional events, workshops and corporate induction seminars. SH/SEA trainings in classroom setting with staff and implementing partners: 3 February 2020: Start-up Workshop – Togo (video conference). 3 March 2020 – FMD Workshop – Senegal (video conference). 6 April 2020: Procurement workshop – Cameroon 20 April 2020: Procurement workshop – Cameroon **1 September 2020 Procurement workshop – Morocco** **15 September 2020 Financial Management workshop - Niger** **29 September 2020 Procurement workshop – Morocco**	Continuous	Continuous

	Actions	*Status*	*Planned actions (2020-2021)*
	• **14 October 2020 – Financial Management workshop – all the WCA region programmes and projects (Planned)** • **November 2020 – Operations Academy (LAC) (Planned)**		
	NEW. Include mandatory SH/SEA training in the automated Consultant onboarding processes.	**Completed**	
	Monitor consultant compliance to SH/SEA online training.	Continuous	Continuous
Revision of procedures on SH	Review SH procedures/employment contracts and align with the United Nations SH model policy as appropriate.	Ongoing	2020-2021
NEW. Managers' and supervisors' SH/SEA Toolkit	Develop Toolkit for managers and supervisors on addressing staff workplace concerns with a focus on SH/SEA. • Listen Up & Support Tips reference guide for managers/supervisors issued by ETH in March 2020 • **New Managers' Guide on how to handle workplace harassment including SH, abuse of authority and discrimination**	**Completed** **Ongoing**	Q4 2020
Enterprise risk management	Contribute to the Corporate Risk Dashboard on unsatisfactory conduct and misconduct-related risks, including SH and SEA, and contribute to the development of mitigation strategies.	Continuous	Continuous
NEW. Workplace culture and staff engagement survey (2019)	Review results of survey and develop action plan to address any areas of concern and/or need for improvement together with Management.	Ongoing	2020-2021
SH/SEA Communication	*NEW.* Develop short video concept on IFAD's efforts to prevent and respond to SEA in the field.		2021
	Ongoing internal communications and updates on SH/SEA.	Continuous	Continuous
Strategic area II: Responding to SH and SEA			
Reporting and complaint mechanisms	Review and further strengthen reporting and complaint mechanisms aligned with best practices.	Ongoing	2020-2021
NEW. Prompt reporting of credible SH/SEA allegations to IFAD Member States	Explore a confidential and secure system of continuous reporting of credible SH and SEA allegations to IFAD Member States.	Ongoing	2020
SEA focal points	*NEW.* Deploy confidential IT platform (Ethics Community Tools) managed by ETH to allow SEA focal points to connect with each other and with ETH to exchange knowledge and best practices.	Completed	
	NEW. Organize global SEA focal points event to discuss and share knowledge and experiences.		2020-2021
	NEW. Develop SEA Focal point action plan for the implementation of awareness-raising activities in the field.	Completed	
	Manage SEA Focal Points programme.	Continuous	Continuous

	Actions	*Status*	*Planned actions (2020-2021)*
NEW. SEA victim and affected persons support mechanism	Explore mechanisms in place in various locations — including at government and other stakeholder/partner levels — for SEA victims and affected persons.	Ongoing	2021
	Strengthen IFAD's approach to supporting SEA victims and affected persons in the field, which may involve collaboration agreements with governments, United Nations entities and other stakeholders.	Continuous	2021
Strategic area III: Mainstreaming SH and SEA in IFAD's operations and funded activities			
SH and SEA in operations	Finalize SECAP to include risk assessment in projects and country strategic opportunities programmes.	**Completed**	
	NEW Review Project Implementation manuals to align with SH/SEA policy.	Completed	
	NEW Revise standard letter to the Borrower to include references to SH/SEA policy.	Completed	
Strategic area IV: Coordination and cooperation			
Engagement with Ethics Network (United Nations and IFIs) and RBAs	Participate in regular meetings of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (United Nations and IFIs) and RBAs.	Continuous	Continuous
Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on Accountability and Inclusion	Participate in meetings of the Task Team on Accountability and Inclusion to discuss best practices in SEA awareness-raising and protection strategies for local beneficiary populations. *NEW.* Follow-up with IASC/UN efforts on PSEA during COVID-19 response and foster collaboration in the field.	Continuous	Continuous
CEB SH task force**/UN SEA working group**	Participate in meetings of the CEB task force on addressing Sexual Harassment within the organizations of the United Nations System **and meetings of the SEA working group**. - Participation in the CEB SH task force conference-call, 24 February 2020 - Participation in the CEB SH task force conference call 15 July 2020 - **Participation in the CEB SH task force conference call 28 September 2020** - **Participation in the SEA working group conference call on 29 September 2020** - **Participation in the SEA working group conference call on 13 October 2020 (planned)**	Continuous	Continuous
NEW. Linkages with stakeholders in the field	Liaise with stakeholders in field locations (the United Nations, IFIs, governments and others) for closer SH/SEA coordination, knowledge-sharing and collaboration (including Resident Coordinators and local SEA Networks, as appropriate).	Ongoing	2020-2021
NEW. Strengthen SEA collaboration through Hosting and Service-Level Agreements	Explore the possibility of including specific SEA collaboration in agreements and contracts entered into by IFAD and hosting agencies and partners in field duty stations.	Ongoing	2020-2021

2018-2019 Action Plan – IFAD's response to the Secretary-General's strategy to improve the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse

	Actions	Status	Planned actions (2019)
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	Training delivered by ETH in classroom settings through the Operations Academy, regional events and workshops. 10/04/2018 – WCA Regional Forum in Mauritania 24-25/04/2018 – Operations Academy (headquarters) 4/07/2018 – Operations Academy (headquarters) 22/10/2018 – FMD Workshop in Indonesia 24/10/2018 – APR Operations Academy in Indonesia 14/11/2018 – NEN Regional event in Morocco 23/1/2019 – ESA Operations Academy in Nairobi 18/3/2019 – LAC Operations Academy in Panama 24/6/2019 – WCA event in Senegal 28/6/2019 – SH/SEA campaign in HQ and ICOs/Hubs 18/7/2019 – SH/SEA campaign dedicated session with 4 ICOs/Hubs in LAC region (Panama, Peru, Brazil, Guatemala) 09/07/2019 – OPR/WCA, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire Project Procurement Training (video conference) 04/09/2019 – Training to OPR staff on procurement related to SH/SEA (video conference) 09/09/2019 – WCA Workshop, Yaoundé, Cameroon, Project Procurement Training (video conference) 16/09/2019 – WCA Workshop, Accra, Ghana, Project Procurement Training (video conference) 23/09/2019 – FMD Workshop, Nairobi, Kenya, Project Procurement Training (video conference) 16/09/2019 – WCA Workshop, Accra, Ghana, Project Procurement Training (video conference) 23/09/2019 – FMD Workshop, Nairobi, Kenya, Project Procurement Training (video conference) 07/10/2019 and 24/10/2019 – SEA Focal Point training (in person and video conference) 19/11/ 2019 – LAC Panama, ICO staff on SH and SEA (video conference) 22/11/2019 – LAC Peru, ICO staff on SH/SEA (video conference) 26/11/2019 – LAC Brazil, ICO staff on SH/SEA (video conference)	Completed	Operations Academy in other regions – Completed

	Actions	Status	*Planned actions (2019)*
	28/11/2019 – Corporate Induction Workshop, IFAD HQ 04/12/2019 – APR Procurement Workshop, China (video conference) 11/12/2019 – APR Procurement Workshop, India (video conference) 16/12/2019 – ESA Procurement Workshop, South Africa (video conference) 18/12/2019 – NEN Procurement Framework Workshop (video conference)		
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.	Completed	
	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.		
	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	
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 about SH and SEA can be filed anonymously.	Completed	
	Remove one-year limitation for reporting SH and SEA.	Completed	
	Ensure that dedicated AUO and ETH 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 ICOs and hubs.	Completed	
	Develop and administer a specific training programme for SEA focal points to receive allegations of SEA in ICOs and hubs.	Completed	

	Actions	Status	Planned actions (2019)
	16/07/2019 – India, Viet Nam		
	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		
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.	Completed	
Project procurement guidelines	Include a reference to SH and SEA in the project procurement guidelines.	Completed	
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 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 SH, 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	