

Document: EB 2019/126/R.39
Agenda: 10(b)(iii)
Date: 4 April 2019
Distribution: Public
Original: English

E



Investing in rural people

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

Focal points:

Technical questions:

Sylvie Martin
Director of Ethics
Ethics Office
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2574
e-mail: s.martin@ifad.org

Sangwoo Kim
Investigation Manager
Office of Audit and Oversight
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2427
e-mail: sangwoo.kim@ifad.org

Danila Ronchetti
Legal Officer
Office of the General Counsel
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2384
e-mail: d.ronchetti@ifad.org

Giorgia Salucci
Chief, Talent Management Unit
Human Resources Division
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2268
e-mail: g.salucci@ifad.org

James Heer
Team Leader Strategic Communication
Communications Division
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2550
e-mail: j.heer@ifad.org

Sheila Mwanundu
Lead Technical Specialist
Operational Policy and Results Division
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2031
e-mail: s.mwanundu@ifad.org

Dispatch of documentation:

Deirdre McGrenra
Chief
Governing Bodies
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2374
e-mail: gb@ifad.org

Executive Board — 126th Session
Rome, 2-3 May 2019

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 and 125th sessions¹ on concrete actions 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. In connection with each of its 2018 sessions, the Board released joint statements welcoming the Fund's achievements in strengthening policies and procedures, raising awareness and implementing training initiatives towards full implementation of the IFAD Policy on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SH/SEA Policy), which was released in April 2018. The SH/SEA Policy has since been translated into the Fund's four official languages and is publicly available on IFAD's website.

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

3. In response to the Board's recommendation for a survey of staff on SH and SEA, in November 2018 IFAD conducted a global staff survey, which included specific questions related to SH and SEA. 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.
 4. Recognizing IFAD's strong commitment to providing a safe working environment that is free from harassment and abuse, IFAD will continue to prioritize prevention and response efforts, and full implementation of its SH/SEA Policy and related action plan (see annex). Furthermore, a campaign on prevention and response to SH/SEA is being organized in IFAD to continue raising awareness on this important topic. In January 2019, in response to an invitation of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), an end-of-year management letter on protection from SEA and reporting SEA allegations was sent by IFAD. The letter informed the Secretary-General of IFAD's efforts to prevent and respond to SEA, and certified that all allegations received as of 1 January 2018 have been reported to the IFAD Executive Board.
- A. Prevention and response
5. 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

¹ See EB 2018/123/R.39, EB 2018/124/R.41 and EB 2018/125/R.14.

monitorable actions included in the Report of the Consultation on the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources.²

6. At the April, September and December 2018 sessions of the Board, information documents were presented to report on the comprehensive approach developed and measures implemented to align IFAD with the strategy adopted by the United Nations common system. The annex to this document provides an update of all actions and initiatives taken by IFAD under the action plan to prevent and respond to SH and SEA.
7. Prevention efforts include mandatory online training and classroom sessions provided by ETH through the Operations Academy, regional events and workshops. Thus far in 2019, ETH has delivered awareness-raising sessions at the East and Southern Africa Division regional event held in Nairobi and the Latin America and the Caribbean Division regional event in Panama. To date, more than 900 IFAD staff and partners have participated in SEA training and awareness-raising events.
8. In order to enhance its prevention efforts, ETH launched a campaign and designated 20 SEA focal points in IFAD Country Offices and hubs in all regions. SEA focal points are responsible for assisting ETH in promoting IFAD's SH/SEA Policy. They will play a key role in: preventing SEA in their respective offices; making recommendations to ETH on ways to promote and improve local prevention strategies; and facilitating access to reporting and support mechanisms. Any SEA allegations received by SEA focal points in relation to IFAD-funded operations will promptly be forwarded to ETH.
9. IFAD is committed to continuing 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. In this regard, the Board has been informed of the measures adopted to strengthen the human resources legal framework with respect to background checks, commercial procurement guidelines and contracts for goods and services extended by IFAD. Bidders must disclose previous convictions, disciplinary measures, other sanctions and investigations regarding SH and SEA; all incidents must be immediately reported. Failure to do so may constitute grounds for immediate termination of a contract and possible debarment by the Sanctions Committee. Records will be kept of staff and other individuals that have been found to have engaged in acts of SH and SEA in relation to IFAD's operations and funded activities.
10. In 2017, the Fund's disciplinary framework was clarified regarding SH and SEA. While all forms of harassment, including SH, are clearly defined as misconduct, a specific item on SEA misconduct was introduced using the United Nations definition. Publicly disclosed whistleblower protection procedures are in place to offer protection from retaliation to those who report concerns or suspicions of misconduct involving IFAD, including SH and SEA.
11. Incidents of SH and SEA can be reported confidentially or anonymously, with no time limitation. In addition, ETH and AUO reporting mechanisms (including hotlines and confidential e-mail addresses) have been made more visible and accessible on IFAD's intranet and website.
12. Support to affected persons can be sought from colleagues and offices such as the ETH, human resources officers, 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.

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

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

13. 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 no tolerance for SH and SEA.
14. At its 2018 December session, 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.
15. As foreseen in the SH/SEA Policy, IFAD continues to strengthen its approach for identifying and addressing SEA in its operations and funded activities. To this end, the Social, Environment and Climate Assessment Procedures are being revised to enhance SH and SEA risk screening and assessment so that mitigation strategies can be developed when appropriate.

C. Collaboration and partnerships

16. The Board welcomed IFAD's participation in: the CEB Task Force on Sexual Harassment H the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse; and the ongoing collaboration among the Rome-based agencies (RBAs) on SH and SEA.
17. In November 2018, the CEB Task Force on SH delivered its report and recommendations to its High-Level Committee on Management. IFAD will work collaboratively within the United Nations system to implement the agreed commitments and joint actions, including continuing implementation of the no-tolerance approach, aligning its SH policies with those of the United Nations system, and exploring the possibility of joining the United Nations common database project designed to maintain records of individuals found to have engaged in SH. The CEB Task Force on SH will continue its review of reporting channels and will propose a framework detailing the various hotlines and helpline services available, and their features. The framework will include an assessment of these services.
18. In the context of RBA collaboration, the Board approved a proposal for Management to explore the possibility of joining a World Food Programme committee comprised of Member States representatives and management, to review and discuss best practices in addressing all forms of harassment including SH and SEA. WFP informed the Director of ETH that the Committee has discussed inviting IFAD to participate in its meetings and those of its SH/SEA subgroup. An invitation to the meetings will be forthcoming.

III. Conclusion

19. Building on its achievements, IFAD is fully committed to developing and maintaining safeguarding standards to prevent and protect against SH and SEA. To this end, the Fund will continue its collaboration with partners in the United Nations system, including the RBAs and international financial institutions. Given the high priority of combatting SH and SEA, and the strong support provided by its Member States and partners, IFAD will continue to its no-tolerance policy with respect to all forms of harassment, including SH and SEA, within the workplace and associated with its operations and funded activities.

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>	Completed	Operations Academy in other regions
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.	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	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	

	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Planned actions (2019)</i>
services	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 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 whistleblowing 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.		Action plan for Q1
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.	Ongoing	
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 sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse	Completed	
Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on	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	

	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Planned actions (2019)</i>
Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse			
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	