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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 123<sup>rd</sup>, 124<sup>th</sup>, 125<sup>th</sup> and 126<sup>th</sup> sessions<sup>1</sup> on the implementation of IFAD's Action Plan and concrete measures 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.<sup>2</sup>
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.
4. The Board welcomed 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.
5. In January 2019, IFAD sent an end-of-year management letter on protection from SEA and reporting SEA allegations to the United Nations Secretary-General and, in April 2019, IFAD forwarded its 2018-2019 Action Plan to prevent and respond to SEA to 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. Recognizing IFAD's strong commitment to providing a safe working environment that is free from harassment and abuse, IFAD continues to prioritize prevention and response efforts.
7. With the launch of IFAD's mandatory online ethics training module on SEA last year, as well as the delivery of training sessions in a classroom setting by the Ethics Office through IFAD's Operations Academy, regional events and workshops, the awareness of more than 1,000 staff and partners has been raised on SH and SEA. So far in 2019, the Ethics Office has provided SH and SEA awareness-raising sessions in Latin America and the Caribbean (in Panama), East and Southern Africa (in Nairobi) and West and Central Africa (in Senegal), reaching approximately 200 staff, consultants and partners.

<sup>1</sup> See EB 2018/123/R.39, EB 2018/124/R.41, EB 2018/125/R.14 and EB 2019/126/R.39.

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

8. As announced at the last Board session, 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, IFAD Staff Association, investigation section of AUO, Security Unit and Communications Division, in June 2019, IFAD launched its first SH/SEA awareness campaign entitled "Speak up, Report, Support". The Ethics Office and Communications Division worked in collaboration to produce a video, which used all IFAD's official languages and in which the President, Vice-President and many staff members participated. The video has been projected on monitors and screens throughout headquarters, and has been made available on the ETH intranet webpage for colleagues in ICOs/hubs. The video was projected at the Board consultation held on 17 July 2019 and will soon be posted on the corporate website and other public media tools.
9. Other activities in support of the campaign include: the SH/SEA awareness day held on 28 June 2019 at IFAD headquarters and dedicated SH/SEA awareness sessions for ICOs and regional hubs conducted by the divisions/units participating in the campaign; and the distribution of SH/SEA information and materials. One of the campaign sessions was held on 18 July via videoconference with four ICOs/hubs in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region and others are being scheduled.
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 of IFAD's operations and their role, in consultation with the Ethics Office, 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. A dedicated training programme for SEA focal points is being rolled out by the Ethics Office.
11. IFAD has initiated monitoring the impact of its SH/SEA prevention measures through the global staff survey, which was conducted in November 2018. The survey included specific questions related to SH and SEA, and the results indicated that a strong majority of respondents (86 per cent) have not witnessed acts of SH or SEA in the past two years and that 90 per cent of respondents know how to report unethical behaviours within IFAD.
12. In June 2019, 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 survey results from all participating organizations will be aggregated by the United Nations Secretariat and shared with participating organizations.
13. 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 2017, the Fund's disciplinary framework was clarified and 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 whistle-blower procedures are in place to offer protection from retaliation to those who report concerns or suspicions of misconduct involving IFAD, including SH and SEA.
14. The Board has been regularly informed of all steps taken towards full implementation of the policy and 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; commitment to conduct thorough SH/SEA background checks upon recruitment of new staff; and the introduction of SH/SEA provisions in IFAD's General Terms and Conditions for the Procurement of Goods and Services for commercial contracts extended by

IFAD. 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.

15. There are various sources of support for SEA victims and other affected persons in IFAD, 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. Mainstreaming SH and SEA in IFAD's operations – Action plan update**
16. 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.
  17. 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.
  18. IFAD continues to strengthen its approach to identifying and addressing SH/SEA in its operations and funded activities. To this end, all new COSOPs are reviewed to assess the extent to which: (i) the country has developed and is implementing specific policies and actions to mitigate gender-based violence including SH and SEA; and (ii) links have been forged with partners that provide ongoing services to support victims of gender-based violence, including SH and SEA. In addition, gender-based violence, including SH and SEA, is an integral part of the screening process for categorizing new projects. Household methodologies are the key tools used at the project level to change discriminatory social and cultural norms that contribute to gender inequality and gender-based violence.
  19. IFAD reviews all social assessment documentation prepared for projects to ensure that it incorporates appropriate precautionary measures to identify, /receive/remedy/monitor/report (proportionate to the risk level) any potential risk of occurrences of SH or SEA in project design, project implementation manuals and environmental and social management plans. Compliance with IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) requirements 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.
  20. The engagement of implementing partners and contractors is critical for promoting IFAD's SH/SEA Policy standards and instilling a culture of no tolerance for SH and SEA. Revised project procurement guidelines will be presented to the Board in December 2019, reflecting recent enhancements to project procurement oversight with respect to SH and SEA. Meanwhile, IFAD has developed an annex with certifications on SH and SEA compliance, which will be included with 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.

### C. Collaboration and partnerships

21. IFAD continues to participate in the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination Task Force on Sexual Harassment and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's new results group on accountability and inclusion. This latter group will work on a number of priority issues including protection from SH and SEA at the field level.
22. Further to the report and recommendations of the CEB Task Force on SH, IFAD is working collaboratively within the United Nations system to implement the agreed commitments and joint actions. These include continuing implementation of the no-tolerance approach, aligning SH policies with those of the United Nations system, joining the United Nations common database project designed to maintain records of individuals found to have engaged in SH, and improving reporting channels.
23. Consistent with its strong engagement in the United Nations system, and particularly with the Rome-based agencies, Management participated in a meeting of the subworking group of the Joint Executive Board and Management Committee on safeguarding against SH and SEA at the World Food Programme on 21 March 2019.
24. Finally, in order to ensure alignment with best practices for safeguarding against SH and SEA, IFAD 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

25. 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 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.
26. IFAD will continue to promote a culture of speaking up, reporting and support, and joins the efforts of the United Nations organizations in reaffirming its no tolerance of SH and SEA.

## 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>
<b>Strategic area I: Preventing SH and SEA</b>			
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>	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.	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.	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	

	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Planned actions (2019)</i>
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	
<b>Strategic area II: Responding to SH and SEA</b>			
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 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. 16/7/2019 – SEA focal point training (APR Region)	Ongoing	
Investigation	Give SH and SEA high priority for investigation.	Completed	
	SEA investigation training for AUO investigators.	Completed	
<b>Strategic area III: Mainstreaming SH and SEA in IFAD's operations and funded activities</b>			
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	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	

	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Planned actions (2019)</i>
<b>Strategic area IV: Coordination and cooperation</b>			
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 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	