

Document:	<u>EB 2021/134/R.23/Add.1</u>
Agenda:	<u>12(a)(i)</u>
Date:	<u>29 December 2021</u>
Distribution:	<u>Public</u>
Original:	<u>English</u>

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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

Addendum

Management's response to Member States' comments

Executive Board — 134th Session
Rome, 13-16 December 2021

For: **Information**

Comments from United Kingdom	Management response
<p><u>Focal points</u> – could IFAD expand the scope/name of IFAD’s SEA focal points to include SH, given both SH and SEA are rooted in power imbalance and gender inequalities and cause unacceptable harm in HQs and the field? The document already mentions SEA focal points are responsible for promoting the SH/SEA policy.</p>	<p>As regards sexual harassment in the workplace, and in line with IFAD policy to preventing and responding to sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse (SH/SEA policy), it is the responsibility of all staff and individuals holding a work contract with IFAD to report in a timely manner any allegations of SH/SEA occurring in the office or in IFAD-funded operations. Moreover, IFAD managers and supervisors at headquarters and in field offices are responsible for creating and maintaining a work environment that helps prevent SH and SEA, and encouraging reporting of such allegations. The Ethics Office (ETH) also promotes the SH/SEA policy internally with its training on SEA and the new training on SH in the workplace – as well as externally by providing training to project staff.</p> <p>IFAD’s SEA focal point programme focuses on sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries. Its objectives are fully in line with the SEA programmes of sister United Nations agencies. The expansion of the programme was required to ensure a wider presence of focal points at field level.</p> <p>The SEA focal points promote IFAD’s SH/SEA policy, in IFAD Country Offices as well as with governments, and participate in in-country SEA networks. Focal points follow specific training developed by ETH and are responsible for making recommendations on further improving local SEA prevention strategies, and facilitating access to reporting and support mechanisms at field level. They liaise with other United Nations SEA networks present in the country, including resident coordinators.</p>
<p><u>Confidential reporting system</u> – Positive that IFAD has a confidential system for prompt reporting of credible SH/SEA allegations to member states. As one of the few Organisations to have this, is IFAD planning to share information, lessons learnt and encourage others to adopt the system? We note that IFAD reported only one case over the past year and would encourage IFAD to act to further reduce underreporting and strengthen reporting and complaints</p>	<p>To the best of our knowledge, IFAD is the only organization that has developed a prompt reporting system that uses a Member States interactive platform to report on credible allegations of SH/SEA. The development and additional information on this innovative tool was shared with United Nations and international financial institution (IFI) SH/SEA networks.</p> <p>As far as reporting mechanisms are concerned, ETH and the Office of Audit and Oversight (AUO) maintain respective confidential helplines and email addresses, to which ETH has added a mobile phone with messaging applications. Information on the helplines and ETH/AUO contacts are promoted at headquarters and in country offices as well as clearly indicated on all materials provided by ETH to project partners. In addition, IFAD SEA focal points are also trained to receive SEA allegations in-country and forward them promptly to ETH. To the best of our knowledge and on the basis of</p>

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<p>mechanisms as part of the action plan next year.</p>	<p>IFAD staff responses to the 2020 United Nations survey on SEA in duty stations classified as at high risk of SEA by the United Nations –shared with the Executive Board (EB 2021/132/R.12) – as well as of the feedback from the IFAD SEA focal points, there is no evidence of underreporting.</p> <p>Finally, in-country networks of United Nations organizations are collaborating, including through the resident coordinator programme, to receive allegations and communicate them to the organization concerned.</p> <p>IFAD is constantly monitoring its reporting mechanisms and will continue to do so as part of the 2022–2023 SH/SEA Action Plan.</p>
<p><u>UN system wide innovation challenge</u> (to identify and support tangible and implementable projects in the areas of leadership, culture and prevent of SH) – note that this is due to launch in early 2022. Would be interesting to know more about what this is/scope/objectives etc.</p>	<p>IFAD believes that innovation is critical to improve, deepen and widen its performance during the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD’s Resources (IFAD12) and beyond. On 7 December 2021, IFAD’s Change Delivery and Innovation Unit (CDI) launched the 2022 IFAD Innovation Challenge. This second edition of the challenge will support ideas that bring innovations into IFAD’s operations or business practices organised into five tracks: (1) Innovative Finance; (2) Data Innovation; (3) Innovations to eliminate “sludge”; (4) Innovations for Culture Change; and (5) Other Innovations. Full details of the 2022 IFAD challenge can be found on IFAD’s website (https://www.ifad.org/en/innovation-challenge-2022).</p> <p>Specifically with regards to culture change, track 4 of the challenge, focuses on:</p> <p>Track 4: Innovations for culture change – Ideas that promote a safe working environment and address culture change areas such as leadership and inclusive work environments, and promote anti-sexual-harassment practices. Promising ideas submitted under this track are encouraged to participate in the United Nations Culture Change Innovation Challenge that IFAD is co-leading with other United Nations partners.</p> <p>In addition to including track 4 in the IFAD Innovation Challenge, CDI , in liaison with ETH, has contributed to the design and will support the implementation of the United Nations Culture Change Innovation Challenge, which seeks to address sexual harassment through leadership and organizational culture change. The importance of this area has been underlined by a strong Rome-based agencies collaboration as well as partnership with other United Nations agencies (including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA] and UN Women), and with the involvement of the UN System Chief Executives Board</p>

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	(CEB). The proposals sought can include, but are not limited to, innovative approaches such as applied behavioural science, bystander intervention training, or initiatives such as gamification, crowd mapping, toolkits, and buddy and/or mentoring programmes.
<p><u>Guide for Borrowers/Recipients of IFAD funding in preventing and responding to SH/SEA</u> – note this has recently been released: could IFAD please share the link.</p>	<p>The Guide for Borrowers/Recipients of IFAD funding on the IFAD policy to preventing and responding to SH and SEA is distributed to all project staff during ETH training on SH/SEA. It is available on the corporate IFAD website through the following link: https://www.ifad.org/documents/38711624/42415576/sea_guidelines_e.pdf/07706bd0-ac15-846b-b3a5-f1674098beac</p>
<p><u>Risk mitigation and partner governments</u> – we note that para 18 states “SH/SEA risk mitigation is a shared responsibility with governments and other partners...” It would be good to understand more around how IFAD is managing these risks and any learning i.e. in relation to support provided to government partners in developing in-country reporting channels and work to advance towards a common understanding of a victim-centred approach. How is IFAD linking in with other partners on this work?</p>	<p>SH/SEA risk assessment is mainstreamed into IFAD operations, from design to implementation to supervision. Borrowers/recipients of IFAD-funded operations have a responsibility to conduct assessments and studies at the project design stage in order to meet the requirements of the updated Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP). These include assessments of risks such as gender-based violence and SH/SEA, and the development of mitigation measures, where appropriate.</p> <p>Dedicated risk indicators are monitored throughout the project cycle and reported on during the supervision process.</p> <p>IFAD also participates in United Nations and IFI SH/SEA networks to share lessons and knowledge.</p>
<p><u>Engagement</u> - Good to hear that IFAD is engaging with other stakeholders, including IFIs. We encourage IFAD to continue this engagement, and to share best practice and work with others to improve standards.</p>	<p>With the objective of aligning IFAD with SH/SEA best practices, ETH is actively participating in the United Nations SEA Working Group, the CEB SH Task Force, the SH/SEA Working Group hosted by the World Bank and other SEA initiatives including a subgroup of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations.</p>
<p>2020-2021 Action Plan <u>IFAD Policy to Preventing and Responding to SH and SEA</u> – this is listed as ongoing: is it due to be updated?</p>	<p>IFAD’s policy to preventing and responding to SH and SEA will be updated to reflect the amendments made to embed the SH/SEA policy in the General Conditions for Agricultural Development Financing and the Project Procurement Guidelines, as approved by the Executive Board at its 128th session.</p>

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<p><u>Workplace culture and staff engagement survey (2019)</u> – this mentions IFAD will develop an action plan to address areas of concern and/or need for improvement. Is this a separate action plan? What will happen to the more recent survey results? How will these feed into next year’s action plan?</p>	<p>The workplace culture (WPC) action plan was designed and its implementation started immediately in May 2021. Fifteen new “key WPC actions” – in addition to 15 initial actions already devised in 2019 and almost fully implemented since – were agreed with staff in an online poll and are still being implemented. The plan prioritizes areas for change that will have high impact, such as: building psychological safety; creating high-purpose, mission-driven environments; decentralizing authority; activating core values; enhancing work-life balance; and growing trust. We expect that the upcoming Global Staff Survey will provide information to help measure some of the early results of the implementation.</p>
<p><u>SEA victim and affected persons support mechanisms</u> – as mentioned briefly above, it would be good to understand more around what is meant by “explore mechanisms in place in various locations – including at government and other stakeholder/partner levels – for SEA victims and affected persons”. What are the actions for 2021?</p>	<p>In May 2021, the CEB SH Task Force issued a document on Advancing a Common Understanding of a Victim-centred Approach to Sexual Harassment. This approach prioritizes respect, dignity, empowerment of victims and the need to create an environment free from sexual misconduct. IFAD expects its implementing partners to take a proactive approach towards victims of SH/SEA. This includes identifying local health centres, clinics and legal services where victims can find the support they need.</p> <p>SH/SEA risk assessment is included in the updated SECAP for each project design, in which appropriate mitigation measures are developed, including measures relating to victim support.</p>
<p><u>Linkages with stakeholders in the field</u> – Is IFAD participating in in-country PSEA Networks? We couldn’t see this mentioned.</p>	<p>Part of IFAD SEA focal points’ responsibilities is liaising and participating in United Nations in-country SEA networks as well as with the resident coordinators.</p>
<p><u>Strengthen SEA collaboration</u> – would it be possible to share examples of what “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” means in practice?</p>	<p>Following the decentralization of IFAD operations and as part of IFAD’s commitment to collaborate with partners on SEA, the Fund is exploring the possibility of including an SEA collaboration clause in service-level agreements for the hosting of IFAD offices by other United Nations organizations, IFIs or governmental partners.</p>

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<p>2022-2023 Action Plan</p> <p>Look forward to viewing IFAD’s 2022-23 SH/SEA action plan. Does IFAD plan to reflect on the findings of the IASC Independent External Review on PSEAH in developing the action plan (although humanitarian focused, we understand it is likely to have some wider relevance to other UN agencies/specialised agencies)?</p>	<p>In developing the 2022-2023 SH/SEA Action Plan, consideration is being given to all relevant documentation, including the recent released document from the CEB SH Task Force on advancing a common understanding of a victim-centred approach to SH. Also feeding into the Action Plan will be the results of the United Nations SEA survey carried out by the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to SEA in 48 duty stations identified by the United Nations as being at high risk of SEA. In line with past practice, IFAD participated in the survey and the Board will be informed of the survey results.</p>

Comments from Canada	Management response
<p>Could you provide further information on the separate stand-alone mandatory training on SH and its difference with the SH/SEA training?</p>	<p>There are currently three mandatory online ethics training courses, plus a refresher programme, whose completion is monitored by ETH: a course on the IFAD Code of Conduct; an anti-harassment course which addresses all forms of harassment, including SH; and an SEA online course which mainly focuses on the IFAD SH/SEA policy and its impact in IFAD-funded-operations.</p> <p>ETH proactively developed a stand-alone module to address SH in the workplace specifically and more comprehensively. This module will be included in the anti-harassment course.</p>
<p>When will the action plan for 2022-2023 will be shared with the Board?</p>	<p>The 2022-2023 SH/SEA Action Plan will be included in the next update to IFAD’s approach to addressing the United Nations Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The update will be submitted to the Board at its 135th session.</p>