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Update on IFAD's Efforts against Hate Speech, Racism and Other Forms of Discrimination

Note to Executive Board representatives

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For: Review

1. In response to the United Nations Secretary-General's Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, IFAD established a multi-divisional task force co-led by the Communications Division (COM) and the Ethics Office (ETH) in 2020. The task force developed a corporate plan of action for IFAD based on the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (annex I).
2. Part of the action plan, and included in the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD12) matrix of commitments and monitorable actions,¹ was the development of an IFAD-wide survey to assess and address the root causes and drivers of hate speech, discrimination and racism. The survey was carried out in the fourth quarter of 2021 in order to gather information from across IFAD on the prevalence and sources of hate speech, discrimination and racism in relation to IFAD and the working environment. This paper provides the key survey findings.
3. Because this was the first survey of its kind, a procurement exercise was carried out to retain the expertise of a survey service provider with experience in this area. Survey questions were developed under the guidance of the service provider and also, where applicable, in consideration of previous related questions from other surveys conducted by other organizations as well as IFAD. On that basis, the survey provider suggested a list of comparator organizations.
4. The survey contained 15 questions: 10 on racism and discrimination and 5 on hate speech (see annex II). As no other United Nations organizations or comparators have conducted a survey on hate speech, the questions were developed based on IFAD's action plan, the United Nations hate speech strategy and the service provider's professional advice.
5. The survey also included follow-up questions on a drop-down menu, allowing respondents, if they wished to do so, to identify a perceived cause for the behaviour they experienced or witnessed (e.g. racial identity, colour, descent, ethnic origin, gender, age, sexual orientation). The final questions were reviewed and approved by the task force. Communications were carried out to publicize the survey and its importance to garner as many responses as possible.
6. The survey was carried out from 2 to 26 November 2021 by the service provider among IFAD staff, non-staff (consultants and interns with a contract of at least three months) and vendors. A total of 637 people responded out of a possible total of 1,518 for a response rate of 42 per cent. The response rate obtained is comparable to the 2019 workplace survey (44 per cent) and was higher among staff (57 per cent) than other respondents, which is again comparable to the 2019 workplace survey (also 57 per cent). According to the service provider based on their experience, the response rate obtained is considered a good result.
7. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the responses, respondents were informed that the service provider was the only party with access to the individual questionnaires and answers. Based on an initial analysis of the results, the following areas were identified as requiring prompt attention:
8. **Racism and discrimination.** In IFAD as a whole, 57 per cent of respondents feel that people in IFAD are treated equally while 22 per cent do not feel people in IFAD are treated equally. The main cause for the unequal treatment mentioned were: national origin (57 per cent), followed by gender (50 per cent), age (34 per cent) and ethnicity (30 per cent). These results are below the comparator organizations and benchmark median. Among respondents, 53 per cent feel that their authority as a supervisor has not been undermined by their racial identity, colour, descent or national/ethnic origin; 6 per cent disagree while 41 per cent are neutral.

¹ Report of the Consultation on the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources – Recovery, Rebuilding, Resilience (GC 44/L.6/Rev.1).

9. Seventy-nine per cent of respondents reported that they had not been treated in a demeaning or humiliating manner in the previous 12 months, while 11 per cent of respondents believe they have been personally treated in a demeaning or humiliating manner by colleagues in the last 12 months. Of those, 43 per cent believe that factors other than gender, national origin, ethnicity, race and age are the cause of the ill treatment. Personal relationships were cited as the principal cause (40 per cent). Thirteen per cent of respondents have witnessed colleagues being treated in a demeaning or humiliating manner by other colleagues in the last 12 months. The main reason provided (35.7 per cent), was abuse of authority, followed by gender.
10. With regard to the reporting of such incidents, 82 per cent of respondents indicated they would report situations of discrimination based on race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability or age if they witnessed them in IFAD (a similar result was obtained in the 2019 workplace survey).
11. Eighty-one per cent of respondents do not believe they have been excluded from meetings, discussions or decisions on the basis of their racial identity, colour descent or national/ethnic origin; and 72 per cent of respondents believe that the assessments made about their performance are fair and unbiased. It was noted that this represents a net increase (19 per cent) from the 2018 Global Staff Survey results.
12. There were significant differences depending on how long respondents had been working for IFAD in terms of their overall responses to the survey. Those who had been with IFAD for five years or less felt significantly more positive, whereas those with six or more years of service had a more negative view.
13. **Hate speech.** With regard to the hate speech questions, overall respondents indicated that they have not experienced or witnessed a situation of hate speech (respectively, 98 per cent and 95 per cent) in relation to their work in IFAD in the last 12 months. Among those who said they did experience (2 per cent, or 13 people) or witness hate speech (5 per cent, or 32 people), the hate speech was committed verbally by an IFAD colleague (as opposed to in writing) and was most commonly perceived to be based on gender or national origin.
14. A total of 14 per cent of respondents felt that hate speech directed at specific groups or individuals in a Member State impacted the work they do for IFAD as it devalues their work, while some indicated it led to reduced performance and productivity.
15. While the positive response rate concerning the questions on racism and discrimination vary from 71 per cent to 82 per cent, with the exception of the question on equal treatment in IFAD which yielded a 57 per cent response rate, it is to be noted that some of the results fall below those of comparator organizations.
16. In terms of follow-up action, the task force will review the corporate action plan to determine whether it should be revised in light of the survey results, and if so a revised action plan will be proposed to the Executive Management Committee. In addition, Management has agreed to share the corporate survey findings internally with IFAD's workforce.

Summary of the IFAD hate speech approach and action plan proposal

<p>Background</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretary-General has asked all United Nations agencies to formulate a plan to implement the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. The Secretary-General appointed his Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide to lead the strategy and plan of action, in recognition of the increase in hate speech around the world, and in the broader global context of growing polarization and intolerance. The goals of the strategy and plan of action are “to enhance United Nations efforts to address root causes and drivers of hate speech” and “to enable effective United Nations responses to the impact of hate speech on societies”. It provides helpful guidance to the United Nations family in understanding this insidious phenomenon and in increasing our efforts to address and counter it at global and national levels. COM and ETH have been designated to serve as the co-leaders of IFAD’s plan to respond to the Secretary-General’s request. The co-leaders convened an interdepartmental task force composed of representatives from the Administrative Services Division, Research and Impact Assessment Division; Human Resources Division; Office of the General Counsel; Global Engagement, Partnership and Resource Mobilization; Operational Policy and Results Division; Information and Communications Technology Division; and Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division. The task force discussed the scope of work, goals and first steps. Representatives from the Field Support Unit and the IFAD Staff Association were invited to participate to enable the task force to benefit from the field and staff perspectives. This expanded group met several times in 2019 and 2020. In developing the plan of action, members of the interdepartmental task force liaised with the Rome-based agencies to explore potential collaboration. In 2020, the Executive Management Committee (EMC) approved the proposed action plan.
<p>IFAD goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a strategy and plan of action based on the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech that reflect IFAD’s mandate, values, governance, and code of conduct, staff, country operations and external partners. Introduce the United Nations and IFAD strategies and plans of action to all staff and non-staff (e.g. consultants and interns), Member States and other partners. Use materials developed by or based on the United Nations strategy and plan of action.

Target audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary audience – Internal audience: the entire IFAD workforce, regardless of duty station or contract type, including senior Management and staff responsible for policy dialogue with IFAD partners. • Secondary audience – External audience: IFAD Member States and other partners.
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit to the EMC a proposed IFAD strategy and plan of action based on the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. Once approved, inform the IFAD workforce and Member States.
<p>Phase one: Introducing the subject of hate speech and the proposed plan internally. The internal communication approach will use a variety of internal communication channels and promote two-way dialogue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Finalize and send a letter from the President to inform the United Nations Secretary-General of IFAD’s plan to act on his request and describe actions to date. • Step 2: Prepare and send a letter from the Directors of COM and ETH to the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and forward IFAD’s action plan. • Step 3: Craft and post a President’s blog on the intranet to (i) share the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech and (ii) inform staff that an interdepartmental task force led by COM and ETH has been established to develop IFAD’s own action plan. • Step 4: Develop key messages on the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech for the EMC and Directors and ask them to have a two-way discussion about this with staff during their departmental/divisional meetings. • Step 5: Share information and planned actions with staff and non-staff on the IFAD intranet. • Step 6: Inform Member States of the Secretary-General’s request and IFAD’s plan through the Member States Interactive Platform. • Step 7: Create digital informational and educational materials based on United Nations products. • Step 8: Post the approaches of the United Nations and IFAD to counter hate speech on the corporate website.
<p>Phase two: Assessing and monitoring.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With assistance from relevant departments/divisions and the service provider, develop a survey that enables staff to identify personal experiences of hate speech and the extent to which hate speech occurs in their work environment, including whether they have witnessed hate speech incidents among IFAD partners or vendors under an IFAD contract. • Learn from the results and feed as appropriate into the action plan. • Report findings to Management and the Executive Board. • Solicit recommendations on ways to address and ultimately eliminate hate speech. • Keep staff updated through the intranet and propose hate speech as a topic for an interactive session (when that becomes possible).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With assistance from relevant divisions, monitor hate speech on public digital platforms in relation to IFAD operations and activities.
<p>Phase three: Education and outreach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use or adapt United Nations materials and training programmes. • Where appropriate, develop IFAD specific training modules to address hate speech and monitor completion. • In consultation with relevant department/divisions, develop and/or enhance mechanisms to support victims. • Take the pulse of the organization regularly through intranet polls.

Questions on racism and discrimination

1. In IFAD people are treated equally.
2. Compared with my colleagues, I feel that I must work harder in order to gain recognition for my work from my supervisor because of my racial identity, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin.
3. I believe that I have been excluded from meetings, discussions and decisions that directly affect my work because of my racial identity, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin.
4. My organization is committed to diversity and inclusion and values the different perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, knowledge and approaches of all its personnel.
5. I feel that work assignments in my workplace are fairly distributed among colleagues irrespective of their racial identity, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin.
6. I feel that my authority as a supervisor has been undermined because of my racial identity, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin.
7. The assessments made about my performance are fair and unbiased.
8. If I witnessed a situation of discrimination based on race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability or age in IFAD I would report it.
9. In the last 12 months, I have personally been treated in a demeaning or humiliating manner by colleagues.
10. In the last 12 months, I have witnessed colleagues treating other colleagues in a demeaning or humiliating manner.

Questions on hate speech

11. In the last 12 months I have been the subject of hate speech in the course of my work for IFAD.
12. In the last 12 months I have witnessed hate speech incidents in the course of my work for IFAD.
13. In the last 12 months in the course of my work with IFAD I have been aware of a situation of hate speech directed at a specific group or individuals in a Member State of IFAD.
14. Hate speech directed at specific groups or individuals in a Member State of IFAD impacts on the work I do for IFAD.
15. I would know who to contact to report an incident of hate speech in IFAD.

Based on the questions and the responses provided, drop-down menus with the following options were available for respondents together with a text box to input free text (in case the option provided was "other") in order to provide more information:

(i) Basis of discrimination/hate speech experienced:

- Age
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Gender Identity
- National origin
- Physical attributes
- Race
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Other personal factors
- I don't know

(ii) Hate speech experienced/witnessed was committed by:

- An IFAD colleague
- A vendor under an IFAD contract
- A government authority, or representative
- Other (for example NGOs, other United Nations organization personnel, international financial institution personnel)

(iii) The source of the hate speech experienced/witnessed:

- E-mail
- Social media
- Verbally
- Newspaper/journal/documents/other printed material
- Other