
Update on IFAD's approach to address the United Nations Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Addendum

Management response to Member States' comments

Document: EB 2022/137/R.15/Add.1

Agenda: 10(a)

Date: 30 December 2022

Distribution: Public

Original: English

FOR: INFORMATION

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Comments from United Kingdom	Management response
<p>The United Kingdom appreciates IFAD's focus and regular Board update on IFAD's Approach to Address the United Nations Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. It is good to see progress with training staff and partners and the link to performance evaluations as an incentive to complete training. We note that IFAD is the only IFI [international financial institution] to make that link, and to create a bespoke reporting mechanism – does IFAD engage with any other MDBs [multilateral development banks] to encourage similar practice, or is there scope to widen IFAD's reporting mechanism with others?</p>	<p>IFAD is part of the IFI network, which comprises MDBs. Following the London Summit on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in the international aid sector, the IFIs provide a yearly update on the implementation of the agreed commitments with respect to SH/SEA.</p> <p>IFAD is also a member of the IFI network on SH/SEA hosted by the World Bank. In this context, IFAD engages and shares best practices with IFIs.</p> <p>Regarding the widening of its reporting mechanisms, IFAD works closely with United Nations Country Teams in various duty stations and collaborates with Resident Coordinators across the countries and regions where IFAD funds or manages projects, activities and operations. Through this collaboration, allegations can be received by any United Nations organizations and are promptly shared and addressed by the concerned organization.</p>
<p>On background checks – it is good to see references to Clear Check and One HR, but we would encourage IFAD to sign up to the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme to further ensure there are no gaps in the IFAD screening process</p>	<p>IFAD is committed to strengthening background checks in its recruitment processes and is assessing the terms and conditions governing the participation in the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme as well as the experience of other organizations currently using the scheme.</p>
<p>On reporting – we would expect to see headline numbers of cases in an update like this. IFAD publishes to the MSIP and we would be keen to learn more about this and how it works in practice. Do members have to proactively log on to check reports or is there an alert to prompt members to access the platform to see the details?</p>	<p>In 2020, at the request of the Executive Board, a prompt reporting system of credible SH/SEA allegations has been implemented using the Member States Interactive Platform (MSIP). Member States, through their authorized representatives, have access to the dedicated SH/SEA page on the platform.</p> <p>A notification is sent to Member States when new information is posted on the SH/SEA page on the platform. Any questions concerning the accessibility of the SH/SEA page can be addressed to the IFAD Secretariat.</p>
<p>It is good to see the variety of reporting channels (para. 10) and the emphasis on victim-centred approach (para. 12), but it</p>	<p>The SH/SEA mandatory trainings for IFAD personnel as well as the SH/SEA trainings provided to implementing partners all refer to the prohibition of sexual activities with</p>

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<p>would be good to see the IASC [Inter-Agency Standing Committee] principles more plainly and consistently reflected in the SH/SEA policy and code of conduct – e.g. the under-18 provision is in the ‘no excuse’ card, but not in the policy or code of conduct – slightly different language across different documentation creates the potential for different interpretations of what is acceptable.</p>	<p>children, i.e. with any person under the age of 18 regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. SH/SEA training materials such as the “no excuse” card also contain references to this prohibition.</p> <p>As foreseen in the 2022-2023 action plan, the IFAD SH/SEA policy is currently being updated to reflect recent developments including the codification of the prohibition of sexual activities with children, and reflect alignment with best practices and international standards including the IASC principles.</p>

Comments from Netherlands	Management response
<p>The Netherlands took note of the 'Update on IFAD's Approach to Address the United Nations Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse'. The Netherlands welcomes the continued efforts of IFAD to prevent and respond to SEA and SH, and the results achieved so far. It is promising progress that IFAD has trained 75 staff members to perform the role of being a SH/SEA focal point. The Netherlands welcomes the preventive approach of IFAD in order to create a safe workplace for IFAD-staff members and implementing partners.</p> <p>The Netherlands supports the amendment in which implementing partners are obliged to ensure that the conduct of the personnel they employ to carry out the project respects the highest ethical standards. However, considering the process of decentralization, the Netherlands would like to know how the Fund will ensure the enforcement of the SH/SEA policy on this level. The reporting of sexual misconduct by a confidential WhatsApp-enabled mobile phone number as described in the report is a helpful starting point in this respect (para. 10).</p>	<p>Through its decentralization efforts, IFAD personnel will have an opportunity to be closer to its funded operations in the field. IFAD is committed to strengthening its prevention and response efforts to SH/SEA at the country offices level and to this end, continues to provide systematic trainings to implementing partners at workshops and start-up events for every IFAD-funded project. Awareness-raising material is also provided so that implementation partners are made aware of their obligations and responsibilities as foreseen in IFAD's SH/SEA policy.</p> <p>Those obligations are also enshrined in the General Conditions for Agricultural Development Financing, which form an integral part of every financing agreement IFAD concludes as well as in the Project Procurement Guidelines. IFAD through its Ethics Office, also developed a Code of Conduct for Project Parties which informs on the expected standards of conduct in project implementation. A Guide for borrowers/recipients of IFAD funding on the SH/SEA policy is also available for project parties.</p> <p>The SH/SEA focal points have been trained by the Ethics Office to act as an additional reporting mechanism and receive allegations of SH/SEA in relation to IFAD-funded projects and to promptly forward those to the Ethics Office. IFAD also collaborates in the field with the UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinators and allegations received through this channel are promptly shared and addressed by the concerned organization.</p> <p>The SH/SEA policy is embedded into the General Conditions for Agricultural Development Financing and mechanisms have been introduced thereto to ensure compliance such as the suspension, in part or in whole, of the right of the borrower/recipient to request withdrawals from the loan or grant account and requesting the immediate removal of project staff who may have engaged in sexual misconduct based on credible allegations from any IFAD-funded or -managed activities or operations pending further action. The Fund can also request that the borrower/recipient conduct an investigation on credible SH/SEA allegations concerning a project staff and inform IFAD of the outcome.</p>

Comments from Canada	Management response
<p>We are pleased to see what measures IFAD is implementing and the progress made to respond to and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.</p> <p>Point 8 mentions that all applicants are required to disclose on their application whether they have been subject to any investigation or sanction for sexual misconduct, but there does not seem to be any indication of whether IFAD does any of its own follow up on the matter. As a result, it seems to imply that the onus is on the applicant to divulge and not on the organization to research it.</p>	<p>IFAD conducts robust background checks of candidates in relation to its recruitment processes in order to prevent the employment or re-employment of individuals who have established allegations related to sexual misconduct. To this end, IFAD participates actively in the United Nations Clear Check database and uses other relevant tools such as One HR, a United Nations service entity, to conduct background checks. IFAD is also committed to exploring other mechanisms and initiatives to strengthen its background checks.</p>
<p>Point 9 mentions “various initiatives dedicated to staff in country offices”. We suggest providing examples going forward.</p>	<p>IFAD through its Ethics Office provides systematic trainings on SH/SEA and other ethical themes at workshop sessions organized for the start-up of any project funded by IFAD. Other initiatives include learning sessions on SH/SEA at local level (such as brown bag lunches, country office staff meetings), the production of a video with the aim of raising awareness on the issues of SH/SEA, the production and distribution of awareness-raising material, such as the No Excuse card, guides in the four languages of the Fund, badge holders, pens and cards highlighting respectively the no tolerance stance and reporting channels for SH/SEA.</p>

Comments from Japan	Management response
<p>Regarding SEAH, the DAC Recommendation (the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance) was adopted in 2019. Japan would like to request IFAD to consider adhering to the Recommendation, following other organizations such as UNICEF and UNHCR.</p>	<p>IFAD takes good note of Japan's comment with respect to the OECD DAC [Organisation for Economic Co-operation - Development Assistance Committee] Recommendation. IFAD's approach to tackling SH/SEA is fully aligned with best practice and international standards, including the DAC Recommendation. The following are examples of IFAD's alignment with such recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IFAD has adopted a policy on SH/SEA that promotes zero tolerance with respect to SH/SEA and gives clear indications to IFAD personnel as well as implementing partners and project parties on their obligations and responsibilities. • IFAD through its Ethics Office developed a Code of Conduct for Project Parties. • The SH/SEA obligations for borrowers/recipients are legally binding as they are enshrined in the General Conditions for Agricultural Development Financing and in the Project Procurement Guidelines. • IFAD applies a victim-centred approach in the prevention and response to SH/SEA and collaborates with partner governments, United Nations Country Teams and Resident Coordinators in various duty stations on the protection from SEA and the mapping of assistance and support services for victims and survivors at local level. • In addition to the confidential helplines including a WhatsApp mobile phone managed by the Ethics Office, reporting mechanisms have been widened with the training by the Ethics Office of SH/SEA focal points in all duty stations to receive SH/SEA allegations and promptly forward those to the Ethics Office. • All IFAD personnel have to complete mandatory trainings on SH/SEA, which are linked to the completion of the annual performance evaluations. IFAD, through its Ethics Office, also provides systematic trainings to implementing partners at workshop and start-up events for every IFAD-funded project. • IFAD integrates its policy on SH/SEA in its funded projects and operations and ensures that SH/SEA risk assessments are included in each project design and where appropriate, mitigation measures are adopted. • IFAD has whistleblowing protection procedures against retaliation, which are available publicly in all language of the Fund.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IFAD through its Ethics Office participates in the UN SEA working group, the IFI SEA network hosted by the World Bank and the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) SH Task Force. • IFAD is the only United Nations entity to have developed a prompt reporting system where it informs its Member States of credible SH/SEA allegations using the Member States Interactive Platform.
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Comments from Switzerland	Management response
<p>Switzerland welcomes IFAD’s engagement on SH/SEA in IFAD itself, with partners and with governments. Overall we see substantial progress in the update and feel encouraged to use certain aspects from IFAD for our own processes.</p> <p>We suggest IFAD indicates in the update on what exactly IFAD requests/requires from its implementing partners in terms of SH/SEA. It helps to have clarity that provisions prohibiting acts of SH/SEA are included in national contracts with project staff, contractors, suppliers and other third parties to be financed with IFAD funds, and allow for the immediate termination of contract based on proven acts of SH/SEA in connection with IFAD-funded or -managed activities or operations. It will help donors’ understanding to have the legal obligation of partners in the update defined.</p>	<p>The obligations and responsibilities of implementing partners can be found in the IFAD SH/SEA policy which is embedded in the General Conditions for Agricultural Development Financing which forms an integral part of financing agreements and the IFAD Project Procurement Guidelines approved by the Executive Board.</p> <p>The obligations and responsibilities of borrowers/recipients can be summarized as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promptly inform IFAD of any allegations of SH and/or SEA they receive in connection with an IFAD-funded or -managed activity or operation. Where IFAD has received credible allegations that project staff may have engaged in such misconduct in connection with an IFAD-funded or -managed activity or operation, IFAD may take appropriate measures including request the immediate removal of persons from any IFAD-funded or -managed activities or operations pending further action. In such cases, IFAD may also request that investigation by national authorities take place for purposes of criminal proceedings. • To include in all contracts with project staff, vendors and suppliers and other third parties to be financed with IFAD funds: (i) provisions prohibiting acts of SH and SEA, (ii) provisions establishing an obligation to immediately report to IFAD or the borrower/recipient incidents of SH and/or SEA in IFAD-funded or -managed activities or operations, and (iii) provisions allowing for the immediate termination of contract based on proven acts of SH and/or SEA in connection with IFAD-funded or -managed activities or operations.

Comments from Switzerland	Management response
	<p>In addition, an amendment to the General Conditions is before the Board to include a reference to the fact that project parties have to ensure that the conduct of project staff is motivated by the highest ethical standards. To this end, IFAD through its Ethics Office, has developed a Code of Conduct for Project Parties.</p> <p>In order to assist implementing partners in meeting those obligations and responsibilities, IFAD through its Ethics Office, provides systematic trainings at workshops and start-up events for IFAD-funded projects. In addition, the Ethics Office released a guide for borrowers/recipients of IFAD funding with the aim of providing support in understanding the requirements of IFAD's SH/SEA and setting out the standards of conduct expected from each project party in charge of the implementation of an IFAD project.</p>
<p>We understand the SH/SEA page on the Member States Interactive Platform has been created in response to the Board members' request to be promptly informed of any credible allegations of SH/SEA that are received by IFAD. We suggest to place the SH/SEA page somewhere more accessible than under FAQs, where most donors will not find it unless they get IT admin support by IFAD. If just the Ambassador to IFAD has access to restricted data regarding SH/SEA, it will be helpful to indicate this clearly in the update, and have transparency on that.</p>	<p>In addition to the FAQs, a dedicated SH/SEA page has been created on the Member States Interactive Platform, where IFAD promptly posts information on credible SH/SEA allegations received. In addition, anonymized information is also provided on the status of the allegation.</p> <p>The SH/SEA dedicated page on the platform is accessible to Member States' authorized representatives. Any accessibility issue should be reported to the IFAD Secretariat.</p>