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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**

**Action:** The Executive Board is invited to review the 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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**Technical questions:**

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## 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, Management established 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, the Human Resources Division, the Office of Audit and Oversight (AUO), Communications Division, Programme Management Department and Corporate Services Department. Since April 2018, the task force has reported to the Executive Board at each of its sessions<sup>1</sup> on the implementation of IFAD's SH/SEA action plans. It also reports on the concrete measures being taken to align IFAD's approach with the Secretary-General's strategy, as described in the report entitled Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A New Approach (A/71/818).
2. Since the release of the IFAD Policy to Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SH/SEA policy) in 2018, IFAD has implemented its 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 SH/SEA action plans, and the 2022–2023 action plan is under way (annex I). Action has been taken to strengthen policies, procedures, contracts and letters of appointment, and training is systematically provided to both the IFAD workforce and implementing partners. The obligation to abide by the IFAD SH/SEA policy has also been extended to borrowers/recipients of IFAD funding through amendments to the General Conditions for Agricultural Development Financing and the IFAD Project Procurement Guidelines.
3. In line with past practice, the 2022–2023 SH/SEA action plan has been shared with the Office of the Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to SEA. The President of IFAD sends a year-end Management letter about protection from SEA and reports SEA allegations to the Secretary-General. A copy of the letter is available on the Member States Interactive Platform.

## II. Update on IFAD's approach to preventing and responding to SH and SEA

### A. Prevention and response

4. IFAD continues its prevention efforts with staff, all individuals holding an IFAD contract (non-staff) and implementing partners. Staff and non-staff personnel are expected to complete a mandatory SH/SEA online training course and recertify every three years as part of the refresher programme. Completion of the course is also a prerequisite for the finalization of the performance evaluation process for staff members. IFAD is the only international financial institution (IFI) that has linked finalization of the staff performance evaluation with completion of mandatory online SH/SEA training.
5. Implementing partners are also trained on SH/SEA through virtual classroom events. Relevant materials developed specifically for project staff – such as a No Excuse Card,<sup>2</sup> which draws on the SH/SEA policy and core principles defined by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and a guide for borrowers/recipients of IFAD funding on the IFAD SH/SEA policy<sup>3</sup> – are systematically distributed to all participants.

<sup>1</sup> See [EB 2018/123/R.39](#), [EB 2018/124/R.41](#), [EB 2018/125/R.14](#), [EB 2019/126/R.39](#), [EB 2019/127/R.42](#), [EB 2019/128/R.51](#), [EB 2020/129/R.5](#), [EB 2020/130/R.4](#), [EB 2020/131/R.2](#), [EB 2021/132/R.12](#), [EB 2021/133/R.17](#), [EB 2021/134/R.23](#), [EB 2022/135/R.14](#), [EB 2022/136/R.16](#).

<sup>2</sup> [No Excuse Card](#).

<sup>3</sup> [Guide for borrowers/recipients](#).

6. As of October 2022, 785 IFAD staff and non-staff members had completed the mandatory online SH/SEA training (a 98 per cent rate of completion) and the stand-alone module on SH in the workplace either upon appointment or through the refresher programme. In addition, approximately 960 project staff members in 22 countries have received classroom training on SH/SEA delivered by ETH.
7. In 2022, the SH/SEA focal points programme has been expanded to all country offices and 75 staff members have been specifically trained by ETH to perform the role. ETH continues to support SH/SEA focal points in their activities; in particular, liaising with United Nations Country Teams, resident coordinators and other local partners. ETH monitors the programme to ensure that newly designated focal points and alternates receive the appropriate training.
8. An integral part of IFAD's prevention approach is to conduct background checks using the United Nations "Clear Check" secure database system to screen applicants for sexual misconduct. All applicants in IFAD are required to disclose on their application whether they have been subject to any investigation or sanction for sexual misconduct. IFAD is committed to further strengthening its background checks including through the services of One HR, a United Nations service entity. Member States are informed promptly and confidentially through the Member States Interactive Platform of all credible SH/SEA allegations received. The information on the platform is also accessible to IFAD's workforce.
9. ETH is continuing work on initiatives to further raise awareness internally and externally on SH/SEA and a video is being developed to present an overview of IFAD's efforts and impact on the ground. Briefings on SH/SEA are part of corporate induction provided by ETH to new staff, and awareness is also raised through various initiatives dedicated to staff in country offices.
10. Sexual misconduct can be reported through various channels. ETH and AUO maintain confidential helplines and e-mail addresses, and ETH has added a confidential WhatsApp-enabled mobile phone number. The 75 SH/SEA focal points and alternates across the country offices act as a reporting channel and liaise promptly with ETH. There is no time limit for reporting suspected sexual misconduct and anonymous reporting is allowed. Additional SH reporting tools are being explored, such as an application with the requisite protection and confidentiality requirements.
11. Substantiated sexual misconduct is grounds for the most severe sanction of summary dismissal and referral of the case to national authorities. It is also grounds for termination of commercial/consultancy contracts extended by IFAD and a cause for debarment. Acts of SH/SEA by representatives of the borrower/recipient can trigger the suspension of requests for withdrawals from the loan and/or grant accounts if, after notification, the Fund has determined that no timely and appropriate action has been taken.

## **B. Mainstreaming the SH and SEA no-tolerance policy in IFAD's operations**

12. Since the adoption of the SH/SEA policy in April 2018, documents have been produced to inform IFAD personnel and project parties about their respective obligations. In particular, emphasis is placed on the obligation to report suspected acts of sexual misconduct so that measures can be taken to protect the alleged victim and to obtain informed consent to review the allegation and proceed with the next steps.
13. To further define general standards of conduct expected from parties involved in the implementation of IFAD-funded projects, ETH led the development and release of the model Code of Conduct for Project Parties. The Code is publicly disclosed on

IFAD's corporate website<sup>4</sup> in all languages of the Fund, and has been included as a template in project implementation manuals.

14. At its 137<sup>th</sup> session, the Executive Board is invited to approve amendments to the General Conditions for Agricultural Development Financing. Among such amendments is a proposal to include an obligation for implementing partners to ensure that the conduct of the personnel they employ to carry out the project respects the highest ethical standards. In addition to the specific obligations under the SH/SEA policy already embedded in the General Conditions, this overarching obligation qualifies IFAD's general expectation with respect to the conduct of project parties entrusted with the implementation of IFAD-funded projects.

### **III. Conclusion**

15. IFAD is committed to continue seeking and applying best practices through its ongoing collaboration with the other Rome-based agencies and through its participation in the United Nations SEA working group and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) task force on addressing SH.
16. Enabling a "speak up" culture, where victims and survivors of sexual misconduct feel safe to report incidents of SH/SEA wherever they are, requires relentless effort. This is a long-term corporate commitment that can be achieved through the dedication of all those involved in the work of IFAD, starting with leadership at all levels, personnel, implementing partners and Member States.

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<sup>4</sup> [Code of Conduct for Project Parties.](#)

## 2022–2023 Action Plan – IFAD’s Policy to Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment (SH) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)

	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Planned actions (2022-2023)</i>
<b>Strategic area I: Preventing SH and SEA</b>			
Update IFAD policies/procedures/processes	Where appropriate, update relevant policies/procedures/trainings to embed references to SH/SEA and promote a victim-centred approach based on respect for the victim’s dignity as well as principles such as confidentiality and required consent.	Ongoing	2023
SH and SEA training and awareness-raising	Monitor staff compliance with SH/SEA online training courses and roll out mandatory refresher training programme.	Continuous	Continuous
	Deploy SH/SEA training for implementing partners, project staff at project start-up workshops and/or other regional events completed and/or planned so far in 2022: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>January 2022 – start-up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 18 January, Mali (completed)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>February 2022 – start-up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 19 February, Nepal (completed)</li> <li>– 26 February, Pakistan (completed)</li> <li>– Uganda (event postponed waiting for new date)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>March 2022 – start-up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 8 March, Congo (completed)</li> <li>– 16 March, Sri Lanka (completed)</li> <li>– 17 March, Morocco (completed)</li> <li>– Chad (event postponed waiting for new date)</li> <li>– Honduras (event postponed waiting for new date)</li> <li>– Kenya (event postponed waiting for new date)</li> <li>– Mexico (event postponed waiting for new date)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>April 2022 – start-up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 1 April, Sri Lanka (completed)</li> <li>– 4 April, Gabon (completed)</li> <li>– 13 April, Tajikistan (completed)</li> <li>– Nigeria (completed October 2022)</li> <li>– India (completed October 2022)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>May 2022 – start-up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 17 May, Central African Republic (completed)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Ongoing	Continuous

	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Planned actions (2022-2023)</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 24 May, Kenya (completed)</li> <li>• <b>June/July 2022 – start-up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 7 June, Argentina (completed)</li> <li>– 9 June, Lesotho (completed)</li> <li>– 14 June, Cambodia (completed)</li> <li>– 22 June, Côte d'Ivoire (completed)</li> <li>– 27 June, Maldives (completed)</li> <li>– 29 June, Cuba (completed)</li> <li>– 28 July, Rwanda (completed)</li> <li>– Kyrgyzstan (postponed waiting for a new date)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>September 2022 – start-up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Brazil (postponed to 2023)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>October/December 2022/January 2023 – start-up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Haiti (planned)</li> <li>– Tajikistan (planned)</li> <li>– <b>Sri Lanka (completed)</b></li> <li>– <b>Angola (completed)</b></li> <li>– Benin (planned)</li> <li>– Zimbabwe (planned)</li> <li>– Nigeria (planned)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
Decentralization	Include refresher SH/SEA training as part of the decentralization processes.	Ongoing	2022
Revision of procedures on SH	Review SH procedures and align with the United Nations SH model policy as appropriate.	Ongoing	2023
Enterprise risk management	Contribute to corporate risk management on unsatisfactory conduct and misconduct-related risks, including SH and SEA, and contribute to the development of mitigation strategies.	Continuous	Continuous
SH/SEA communication	Production of a short video on IFAD's efforts to prevent and respond to SEA in the field.	Ongoing	2023
	Ongoing internal communications and updates on SH/SEA.	Continuous	Continuous
Management compact	Develop a compact for Directors and Senior Management on diversity, equity and inclusion, workplace culture and SH/SEA: reiterate the commitment made by Management to integrate the diversity and workplace culture principles and a work environment free of all forms of harassment and discrimination in all IFAD activities. Post the signed compact internally.	Ongoing	2022
<b>Strategic area II: Responding to SH and SEA</b>			
Reporting and complaint mechanisms	Review and further strengthen reporting and complaint mechanisms including at the IFAD Country Office (ICO) level.	Ongoing	2023

	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Planned actions (2022-2023)</i>
SEA victim and affected persons support mechanisms	Identify with the support of SEA focal points in-country mechanisms in place in various locations to provide assistance to SEA victims and affected persons and explore collaboration with governments, United Nations entities and other stakeholders.	Ongoing	2023
<b>Strategic area III: Mainstreaming IFAD no-tolerance for SH/SEA in its operations and funded activities</b>			
SEA focal point programme	Expansion of the SEA focal point programme in all ICOs. Identify all focal points and alternates, ETH to develop and roll out a specific training to enable them to perform the SEA focal point role. APR – completed LAC – completed NEN – completed ESA – completed WCA – completed Additional session provided on 14 March 2022.	Completed	2022
	Manage SEA focal point programme. Training newly designated SH/SEA focal points.	Continuous	Continuous
Project implementation manual (PIM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Revise the PIM to embed references to IFAD's no-tolerance policy on SH/SEA.</li> <li>- Propose a template code of conduct for implementing partners to be added in the PIM.</li> </ul>	Completed	2023
<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	Continuous
Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on Accountability and Inclusion	Participate in meetings of the Task Team on Accountability and Inclusion to discuss best practices in SEA awareness-raising and protection strategies for local beneficiary populations.	Continuous	Continuous
CEB SH task force/United Nations SEA working group	Participate in meetings of the CEB task force on addressing SH within the organizations of the United Nations system and meetings of the SEA working group.	Continuous	Continuous
Strengthen SEA collaboration and linkages with stakeholders in the field	Liaise with stakeholders in field locations (the United Nations, IFIs, governments and others) for closer SH/SEA coordination, knowledge-sharing and collaboration (including resident coordinators and local SEA networks, as appropriate).	Ongoing	2022-2023
Innovation challenge	Participate in the United Nations system-wide innovation challenge in close cooperation with the World Food Programme Innovation Accelerator to identify and support tangible and implementable projects in the areas of leadership, culture and prevention of SH.	Completed	2023