
Update on IFAD's efforts against hate speech, racism and other forms of discrimination

Document: EB 2023/OR/16

Date: 28 November 2023

Distribution: Public

Original: English

FOR: REVIEW

Action: The Executive Board is invited to review the update on IFAD's efforts against hate speech, racism and discrimination.

Technical questions:

Bruce Murphy

Chief, Corporate Content and Regional Outreach Team
Communications Division
e-mail: b.murphy@ifad.org

Berkis Patricia Perez

Chief of Ethics
Ethics Office
e-mail: b.perez@ifad.org

Update on IFAD's efforts against hate speech, racism and other forms of discrimination

I. Introduction

1. In response to the Secretary-General's Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, at the request of the Office of the President and Vice-President, a multi-divisional task force co-led by the Communications Division (COM) and the Ethics Office (ETH) was established in 2020. The Task Force on Hate Speech, Racism and Discrimination has been leading the implementation of a corporate plan of action, which was revised following the IFAD-wide survey on hate speech, racism and discrimination conducted in November 2021.
2. The leadership of the task force changed in mid-2023 with the appointment of the new Chief of Ethics. Efforts have also been made to expand the membership, particularly with regard to staff based in the field, and to coordinate with other initiatives such as the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group, whose work intersects with that of the task force at certain points.
3. Hate speech, racism and discrimination are the focus of ongoing global public debates and the plan of action needs to continue to evolve in response to developments within and outside IFAD, including across the United Nations system. Effective use of available resources and avoidance of duplication are also required. (The revised plan is attached as the annex.)
4. An ongoing priority of the task force is to continue to inform staff and post updates on the intranet about initiatives to combat hate speech, racism and discrimination, such international days of observance, and statements of the Secretary-General on relevant themes or events. IFAD has also participated in the United Nations inter-agency meeting on anti-racism, where information is shared about system-wide actions and initiatives. This has led contacts with counterparts at other agencies, gathering of material such as toolkits and workbooks, experience-sharing and potential participation of IFAD at other events.
5. The issues of hate speech, racism and discrimination have been included in the diversity, equity and inclusion e-learning course launched in October 2023. ETH also holds discussions with divisions on appropriate behaviour in the workplace, and systematically brings issues around hate speech, racism and discrimination to the attention of IFAD staff attending various IFAD events.
6. In terms of providing staff with guidance and the means to report or communicate about hate speech, racism and discrimination, ETH continues to monitor the dedicated e-mail that was created as part of the action plan and seek further mechanisms and procedures. Further support will be offered through the "active bystander" training currently under development, which will deal with various forms of misconduct including hate speech, racism and discrimination. A desk review of existing policies and procedures is also under way.
7. These issues are both serious and difficult to talk about, so it is essential to support dialogue and acknowledgement of hate speech, racism and discrimination among the IFAD workforce. The need to go beyond (necessary) complaint mechanisms and develop safe channels for two-way communication about these sensitive and even distressing issues has led to a proposal by the task force to create a space on the intranet in which staff can communicate their experiences while safeguarding confidentiality (currently in development).
8. Another initiative to further engage with the IFAD workforce will take place on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on

- 10 December 2023, with a commemorative event (currently at the planning stage) and campaign integrating various relevant themes, including hate speech, racism and discrimination.
9. Similarly, with a view to addressing and raising awareness of intersectionality, the task force has initiated discussions with colleagues involved in other initiatives that relate to discrimination and exclusion. This has included working with the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) advocate network and the gender team in order to coordinate the various initiatives and to recognize that individuals may be subject to multiple forms of exclusion, discrimination and mistreatment at the same time. It is important that efforts to address all forms of discrimination and misconduct are aligned. Any areas of overlap (e.g. both racism and discrimination are drivers of exclusion, as highlighted in the DEI initiative and training) serve to demonstrate how the various themes intersect and how their agendas are additive and mutually reinforcing rather than duplicative. The DEI Talks on creating a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion, held on 29 September, dealt explicitly with hate speech, racism and other forms of discrimination, intersectionality and, most prominently, the difficult issue of unconscious bias.
 10. As IFAD becomes a more decentralized and global team, it is important to include the entire workforce in dialogue on these themes and in the work of the task force. New staff members who are outposted in IFAD offices in the regions have joined. Efforts are also being made to publish content that specifically reflects the challenges that they face in the environments in which they work. Some activities have been deferred to 2024, such as capacity-building activities for managers (the experience of other Rome-based agencies in this area has been sought) and the publication of a guidance note (which could draw on the rapid proliferation of materials, trainings and resources across the United Nations system to which IFAD has access). A follow-up "pulse" survey on hate speech, racism and discrimination is being planned for the first quarter of 2024 and work with the external supplier has already begun.

IFAD action plan to address hate speech, racism and discrimination (2023–2024) (revised)

	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Expected/observable results</i>	<i>Implementation timeline</i>
Pillar 1 – Policy				
1.1	President to send a letter to inform the United Nations Secretary-General of IFAD's plan to act on his request and describe actions to date.		Prepare and send letter.	Completed
1.2	Directors of COM and ETH to prepare and send a letter to the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and forward IFAD's action plan.		Prepare and send letter.	Completed
1.3	President to share the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech and inform staff that an interdepartmental task force led by COM and ETH has been established to develop IFAD's own action plan.		Prepare and post a President's blog on the intranet.	Completed
1.4	Inform Member States of the Secretary-General's request and IFAD's plan through the Member States Interactive Platform.		Post a message on the Member States Interactive Platform.	Completed
1.5	Regularly report and update task force actions and action plan deliverables to Management and the Executive Board.		Updates prepared and shared with Management and the Executive Board.	Continuous
1.6	Ensure that IFAD policy and procedures appropriately address hate speech, racism and discrimination in order to foster an inclusive IFAD working environment.		Conduct a desk review of human resources procedures and other relevant rules and procedures and propose amendments to Management where appropriate.	Ongoing

Pillar 2 – Internal communication				
2.1	Inform IFAD personnel on the United Nations strategy and IFAD planned actions to counter hate speech, racism and discrimination.		Post information on the intranet and explore other channels of communication.	Continuous
2.2	Ensure IFAD personnel can access relevant information on hate speech, racism and discrimination at all times, and provide an avenue for staff to voice their views on the implementation of strategic action plan.		Create a repository of education material for personnel, with a function where staff can provide comments.	Started (materials being gathered)
2.3	Create a baseline to gather information from across IFAD on the prevalence and source of hate speech racism and discrimination in relation to IFAD and the working environment.		Development of an IFAD-wide survey to assess and address the root causes and drivers of hate speech, racism and discrimination.	Completed
2.4	Assess and address the root sources and causes of hate speech, racism and discrimination as identified by survey results.		Review and analyse survey results and, where appropriate, propose amendments to the action plan.	Completed
			Share survey key findings internally with IFAD personnel.	Completed
2.5	Encourage all IFAD personnel to report hate speech, racism and discrimination observed on public digital platforms in relation to IFAD operations and activities.		Create an e-mail account dedicated to the prevention of hate speech, racism and discrimination to receive comments and feedback.	Completed
			Collect data on areas of concern consider options for action.	Ongoing
2.6	Monitor the understanding and views of personnel with respect to hate speech, racism and discrimination.		Conduct regular internal pulse surveys.	In process
Pillar 3 – Leadership				
3.1	Educate managers on how to address hate speech, racism and discrimination in the workplace.		Develop specific training for managers on how to address hate speech racism and discrimination.	2024
3.2	Managers to raise awareness of hate speech, racism and discrimination in departmental/divisional workplaces in all duty stations.		Management to lead and have discussions with staff during departmental/divisional meetings on hate speech, racism, discrimination with the support of the task force where appropriate.	Ongoing

Pillar 4 – Education and awareness raising				
4.1	Increase knowledge and awareness of hate speech, racism and discrimination in IFAD and in relation to IFAD activities and operations.		Creation of digital information and educational materials for IFAD, based on United Nations products.	2024
			Organize and deliver a hate speech, racism and discrimination awareness event.	In process
			Develop and publish guidance note on hate speech, intersectionality, racism and discrimination with concrete examples and information on how to handle such situations including reporting mechanisms.	2024
4.2	Increase awareness on unconscious biases.		Explore the possibility of providing personnel with self-assessment tools to examine their own biases.	Ongoing
4.3	In consultation with relevant department/divisions, develop and/or enhance mechanisms to support IFAD victims of hate speech, racism and discrimination.		Review existing support mechanisms and, where appropriate, propose improvements.	Ongoing