
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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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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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, the Communications Division (COM), the Programme Management Department (PMD) and the Corporate Services Department. Since April 2018, the task force has reported to the Executive Board at each of its sessions¹ 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 on 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 is currently implementing its plan for 2022–2023 (annexes I and II). Actions have been taken to strengthen policies, procedures, contracts and letters of appointment, and training is systematically provided to the IFAD workforce and to 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 Executive Board and with the Office of the Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to SEA. In addition, the President of IFAD sends a year-end Management letter on protection from SEA and reports SEA allegations to the United Nations 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 its staff, all individuals holding an IFAD contract (non-staff) and implementing partners. In addition to the mandatory SH/SEA online training course and refresher programme that staff and non-staff personnel are expected to complete, ETH manages the implementing partners training on SH/SEA through virtual classroom events.
5. Material has been developed specifically for project staff, such as an SH/SEA webinar in IFAD's four official languages and a guide for borrowers/recipients of IFAD funding on the IFAD SH/SEA policy.
6. Since the submission of the update on SH/SEA to the last Executive Board session, more than 450 staff members, persons hired by the Fund under a non-staff contract and project personnel have received SH/SEA training either online or in virtual classroom sessions. To date, 98 per cent of staff have completed the mandatory SEA training for the first time or have been recertified as part of the refresher programme. In addition, over 400 staff members have completed the module developed by ETH on SH in the workplace since its launch.

¹ 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 2019/129/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](#), [EB 2022/137/R.15](#), [EB 2023/138/R.11](#).

7. ETH continues to support SH/SEA focal points in their activities and monitor the programme to ensure that newly designated focal points and alternates receive the appropriate training. In this respect, a cohort of 30 newly appointed SEA focal points and alternates have been trained in 2023. As part of their role, the focal points and alternates circulate SH/SEA awareness-raising materials and information on reporting mechanisms in their respective offices and during start-up events, liaise with local United Nations Country Teams and resident coordinators, and contribute to the local United Nations SH/SEA strategy. Where possible, the SEA focal points encourage governments to have the SH/SEA awareness material translated into local languages.
8. ETH liaises regularly with PMD to ensure that presentations on SH/SEA are included in project start-up workshops with implementing partners. Such training is provided by ETH through virtual classroom events and is crucial to raise awareness at the early stages of project implementation in order to help prevent any act of SH/SEA in an IFAD-funded project. Relevant multilingual materials developed specifically for implementing partners and project staff (such as the [guide for borrowers/recipients of IFAD funding on the SH/SEA policy](#), the [No Excuse Card](#) and the [Code of Conduct for Project Parties](#)) are publicly disclosed and systematically distributed to all participants, either in electronic or in paper format, ahead of the presentation. This allows them to familiarize themselves with the content and provide them with a chance to request clarifications or ask questions.
9. Consistent with previous years, IFAD is participating in the 2023 United Nations SEA survey carried out by the Office of the Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to SEA. The survey was received by ETH on 3 July and has been sent to approximately 320 IFAD staff in over 40 duty stations identified as high risk for SEA by the UN and where IFAD has country offices. As per past practice, the survey results will be shared with the Executive Board as soon as they are made available to IFAD.
10. As part of the 2022–2023 SH/SEA action plan, ETH in collaboration with the Communications Division developed a [video](#) reiterating IFAD’s no-tolerance stance towards acts of SH/SEA, promoting a speak-up culture and providing information on IFAD’s reporting channels. The video is publicly disclosed and is also included in the training for SH/SEA focal points and alternates.

B. Mainstreaming the SH and SEA no-tolerance policy in IFAD’s operations

11. Since the adoption of the SH/SEA policy in April 2018, IFAD has been raising awareness of its no-tolerance policy with implementing partners. Emphasis is placed on the obligation not to engage in sexual misconduct and to report suspected acts of sexual misconduct through either national authorities or the Fund, and in all cases to promptly inform IFAD.
12. Continuous efforts are made to promote IFAD’s no-tolerance stance towards acts of sexual misconduct, both within IFAD and with implementing partners, especially in the context of IFAD’s decentralization. Engaging with the field is a priority for ETH to ensure global outreach in terms of SH/SEA prevention. In addition to the regular awareness-raising presentation on SH/SEA at project start-up, ETH will liaise with regional divisions to participate in regional events and will seek new opportunities to emphasize the importance of the SH/SEA policy and the role of the focal points and alternates in their respective duty stations. To complement its arsenal of actions to prevent sexual misconduct, ETH will propose holding regular informal events and Q&A sessions for regional and country offices to further sensitize staff and non-staff on SH/SEA misconduct and underscore their duty to speak up and say no to unacceptable behaviour.

13. Based on the code of conduct for project parties model developed by ETH to set out the standards of conduct expected from each project party in charge of implementing IFAD-funded projects, ETH will assess if there is a need to prepare specific documentation in support of the SH/SEA prevention strategy, specifically dedicated to project staff and implementing partners on the ground.

III. Conclusion

14. Combatting SH/SEA is a long-term commitment that can be achieved only through significant concrete collaboration by all parties involved in IFAD's activities and alignment with best practices of other United Nations organizations and international financial institutions (IFIs).
15. ETH is committed to collaborating with the other Rome-based agencies, the United Nations SEA working group, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) task force on addressing SH and the IFI network to maintain and advance standards to prevent and respond to SH/SEA. Efforts to communicate on IFAD's zero tolerance stance and enhance a speak-up culture in IFAD are continuously under way to prevent SH/SEA and ensure a safe working environment for all IFAD staff and other parties involved in IFAD's activities.

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>
Strategic area I: Preventing SH and SEA			
Update IFAD policies/procedures /processes	Where appropriate, update relevant policies/procedures/training 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
	<p>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 2022/2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 2022 – start-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 18 January, Mali (completed) • February 2022 – start-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 19 February, Nepal (completed) – 26 February, Pakistan (completed) – Uganda (event postponed waiting for new date) • March 2022 – start-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 8 March, Congo (completed) – 16 March, Sri Lanka (completed) – 17 March, Morocco (completed) – Chad (event postponed waiting for new date) – Honduras (event postponed waiting for new date) – Kenya (event postponed waiting for new date) – Mexico (event postponed waiting for new date) • April 2022 – start-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1 April, Sri Lanka (completed) – 4 April, Gabon (completed) – 13 April, Tajikistan (completed) • May 2022 – start-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 17 May, Central African Republic (completed) – 24 May, Kenya (completed) • June/August 2022 – start-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 7 June, Argentina (completed) – 9 June, Lesotho (completed) – 14 June, Cambodia (completed) – 22 June, Côte d'Ivoire (completed) – 27 June, Maldives (completed) – 29 June, Cuba (completed) – 28 July, Rwanda (completed) – 4 August, Nigeria (completed) – 9 August, Angola (completed) – Kyrgyzstan (postponed waiting for a new date) • September 2022 – start-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Brazil (postponed to 2023) – 28 September, Sri Lanka (completed) 	Ongoing	Continuous

	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Planned actions (2022–2023)</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October/December 2022 start-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 12 October, India (completed) – 3 November, Zimbabwe (completed) – 7 December, Benin (completed) – 21 December, Somalia (completed) • January/April 2023 – start-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Nigeria (postponed, waiting for new date) – 16 January, Viet Nam (completed) – 7 February, Côte d'Ivoire (completed) – 24 February, Cambodia (completed) – 14 March, Tajikistan (completed) – 28 March, Côte d'Ivoire (completed) – 28 March, Ethiopia (completed) – 29 March, Haiti (completed) – 29 March, Ecuador (completed) – 4 April, Ghana (completed) • May/September 2023 – start-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 9 May, Mexico (completed) – 18 May, Brazil (completed) – 23 June, Democratic Republic of the Congo (completed) – 26 July, Türkiye (scheduled) – 2 August, Mali (scheduled) – 16 August, Nigeria (scheduled) – 7 September, Lao People's Democratic Republic (scheduled) 		
Decentralization	Include refresher SH/SEA training as part of the decentralization process.	Continuous	Continuous
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 SH/SEA.	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	2023
Strategic area II: Responding to SH and SEA			
Reporting and complaint mechanisms	Review and further strengthen reporting and complaint mechanisms including at the IFAD Country Office (ICO) level.	Ongoing	2023
SH/SEA victim and affected persons support mechanisms	Identify with the support of SH/SEA focal points in-country mechanisms in place in various locations to provide assistance to SH/SEA victims and affected persons and explore collaboration with governments, United Nations entities and other stakeholders.	Ongoing	2023
Strategic area III: Mainstreaming IFAD no-tolerance for SH/SEA in its operations and funded activities			
SH/SEA focal point programme	Expansion of the SH/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 SH/SEA focal point role. Asia and the Pacific (APR) – completed Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) – completed	Completed	2022

	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Planned actions (2022–2023)</i>
	Near East, North Africa and Europe (NEN) – completed East and Southern Africa (ESA) – completed West and Central Africa (WCA) – completed Additional session provided on 14 March 2022.		
	Manage SH/SEA focal point programme. Training newly designated SH/SEA focal points.	Continuous	Continuous
Project implementation manual (PIM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revise the PIM to embed references to IFAD's no-tolerance policy on SH/SEA. - Propose a template code of conduct for implementing partners to be added in the PIM. 	Completed	2023
Strategic area IV: Coordination and cooperation			
Engagement with Ethics Network (United Nations and IFIs) and Rome based agencies (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
Chief Executives Board for Coordination (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 SH/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).	Continuous	Continuous
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