

# IFAD policy to preventing and responding to sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse



Investing in rural people



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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. IFAD is committed to the principles of integrity, professionalism and respect for the dignity of all people. IFAD seeks to ensure a safe working environment free of harassment, including sexual harassment, and free of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in its activities and operations. SEA is a grave breach of trust of the people IFAD intends to serve and can have devastating consequences for victims, their families and affected communities. Thus, IFAD deems it central to its core values and mandate to have in place an effective policy addressing sexual harassment and SEA in its activities and operations.

2. IFAD has no tolerance towards acts of sexual harassment or SEA and takes action to prevent sexual harassment and SEA from occurring in the first place and ensures a prompt and effective response to allegations.

3. The objective of this policy is to: (i) define obligations of IFAD staff and those individuals holding a work contract with IFAD with respect to sexual harassment and SEA; and (ii) set out IFAD's rules and procedures and approach in preventing and responding to sexual harassment and SEA.

4. This policy enters into effect immediately. Related internal policies, procedures and contractual documents will be amended to reflect the measures contained herein, including the Implementing Procedures, SECAP complaint mechanisms and other internal processes.

## II. DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE

1. In line with international standards, in particular the 2003 United Nations Bulletin on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13), IFAD defines Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) as follows:

*“sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries in the context of IFAD’s operations in the field: any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of others (sexual exploitation); the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions (sexual abuse).”*

2. Sexual harassment is defined as follows:

*“any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour or other verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that unreasonably interferes with work, alters or is made a condition of employment, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.”*

3. For the purposes of this Policy, the term “SEA” refers to behaviour towards beneficiaries of IFAD-funded or -managed activities and operations (defined as “persons that IFAD intends to serve through its grants and loans”). The term “IFAD activities and operations” refers to all activities and operations financed or managed by the Fund.

4. SEA may include any unwanted or forced sexual act committed without consent of the other person or threat thereof, sexual activities with a minor, unwanted touching of a sexual nature, forcing someone to have sex with anyone, videotaping or photographing sexual acts and posting them without permission, name calling with sexual epithets, and telling someone that they or anyone else have to engage in sexual acts as a condition for anything. SEA risk assessment is mainstreamed into all project designs funded by IFAD and SEA obligations are embodied in agreements and related financial documentation.

5. For the purposes of this Policy, the term “sexual harassment” refers to a form of harassment generally associated with the work context that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to: unsolicited requests for sexual favours, requests for sexual favours linked to career prospects, unwanted physical contact, propositions or pressure for sexual activity, continued suggestions for social activity outside the workplace when it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome, visual displays of degrading sexual images, objects or written material, leering, whistling or making sexually suggestive gestures, sexually suggestive conduct or offensive remarks of a sexual nature.

### **III. IFAD SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SEA POLICY**

#### **Section 1 – Guiding principles**

6. IFAD staff and other individuals holding a work contract with IFAD shall work and behave in a manner that respects and fosters each other’s rights and the rights of the people they serve. This includes an obligation to abstain from any acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA and to report in a timely manner any allegations of sexual harassment and/or SEA that may arise at IFAD or in the context of an IFAD-funded or -managed activity or operation. IFAD managers and supervisors have the responsibility to create and maintain a work environment that helps prevent sexual harassment and SEA and to encourage reporting of allegations of sexual harassment and/or SEA.

7. IFAD has no tolerance for acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA. IFAD is committed to facilitating the reporting of sexual harassment and SEA and ensuring a prompt and effective response to allegations of sexual harassment and/or SEA, including through timely and objective investigations. IFAD is also committed to protecting reporting parties who act in good faith from retaliation. IFAD is further committed to preventing sexual harassment and SEA from occurring in the first place, for example through activities such as awareness raising, background checks and appropriate project design.

## **Section 2 – Application**

8. This policy applies to all IFAD staff, independent of their location, grade, type or duration of appointment, including staff members on loan, Junior Professional Officers and Temporary Short-term staff. It also applies to all individuals hired by IFAD under a non-staff contract such as consultants, interns as well as vendors and suppliers contracted by IFAD.

9. In its spirit and principles, this policy also applies to all recipients of IFAD funding and third parties contracted using IFAD's funding such as consultants, contractors and vendors.

## **Section 3 – Responsibilities**

### **A. Responsibilities of IFAD staff and individuals holding a work contract with IFAD**

#### **1. Obligation to act ethically**

10. IFAD staff and other individuals holding a work contract with IFAD are expected to adhere to the highest ethical standards, both in their professional and personal dealings, and to abide by the core values of the Fund: integrity, respect, professionalism and focus on results. This includes an obligation not to sexually harass, exploit or abuse others. In furtherance of that, IFAD staff and individuals holding a work contract with IFAD have the following responsibilities:

- i. Abstain from engaging in any acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA. Acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA are considered serious misconduct, which may lead to summary dismissal, termination of contract and/or referral to national authorities.
- ii. Abstain from encouraging or condoning acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA committed by others in connection with an IFAD-funded or -managed activity or operation. Encouraging or condoning acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA is considered misconduct, which may lead to disciplinary measures.
- iii. Abstain from any sexual activities with beneficiaries, as such relationships are marked by inherently unequal power dynamics, and may undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of the Fund.

- iv. Contribute to a work environment that prevents sexual harassment and SEA from occurring in the first place. In particular, managers and supervisors are expected to clearly communicate IFAD's no-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment and SEA, behave in an exemplary manner and encourage timely reporting of sexual harassment and SEA allegations. IFAD staff and individuals holding a work contract with IFAD are required to participate in anti-harassment and SEA trainings and support the Ethics Office in awareness-raising campaigns involving third parties, in particular project staff and local communities.

## **2. Obligation to report**

11. IFAD staff and other individuals holding a work contract with IFAD who witness or otherwise become aware of potential acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA, or who have reason to suspect that such acts have been or are being committed at IFAD or in connection with an IFAD-funded or -managed activity or operation, have a duty to immediately report this to IFAD through the appropriate reporting channels. The appropriate reporting channel for sexual harassment and SEA is the Ethics Office (Hotline +39 06 5459 2525 or [ethicsoffice@ifad.org](mailto:ethicsoffice@ifad.org)). SEA allegations can also be reported to the Office of Audit and Oversight (Hotline +39 06 5459 2888 or [anticorruption@ifad.org](mailto:anticorruption@ifad.org)).

12. Where an IFAD staff member or or an individual holding a work contract with IFAD witnesses or otherwise becomes aware of, or has reason to suspect, acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA, but fails to report this to IFAD in a timely manner, IFAD considers this as misconduct, which may lead to disciplinary measures.

13. The reporting of false allegations of sexual harassment and/or SEA made with an intent to harm the reputation of another person or IFAD, or to take undue advantage of IFAD's reporting mechanism for personal benefit, is considered misconduct, which may lead to disciplinary measures.

14. IFAD staff and individuals holding a work contract with IFAD are required to cooperate unreservedly with the Office of Audit and Oversight and/or the Ethics Office and to respond promptly to any requests for information.

## B. Responsibilities of IFAD

### 1. Establish and maintain an appropriate reporting mechanism

15. IFAD makes available an immediate and confidential reporting mechanism to report potential acts of sexual harassment associated with the workplace at IFAD and/or SEA in connection with an IFAD-funded or -managed activity or operation. To this end, external individuals including beneficiaries may rely on the Ethics Office and/or Office of Audit and Oversight hotlines and confidential email addresses posted on IFAD's internet website and also use the Social Environment and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) complaint mechanism which is made available to the public. Any complaints of sexual harassment and/or SEA received through SECAP are forwarded to the Ethics Office for further action. Existing reporting channels are monitored on a regular basis and strengthened where appropriate.

16. IFAD, through its Ethics Office, appoints and trains dedicated senior focal points in its offices and hubs to receive allegations of SEA in relation to IFAD-funded projects in the field in the languages of the Fund and local languages.

17. IFAD staff and any individual holding a work contract with IFAD report their allegations, observations or suspicions regarding potential acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA to the Ethics Office or the Office of Audit and Oversight. External parties, including potential victims of sexual harassment and/or SEA, are encouraged to report their allegations, observations or suspicions through the Ethics Hotline and confidential email address, where they can also receive confidential advice.

18. Reports of sexual harassment and SEA may be filed anonymously. "Anonymity" means that reporting parties do not provide their names. Where a report is filed anonymously, the reporting party is encouraged to at least provide an email address or phone number for potential follow-up questions.

19. All reports of sexual harassment and SEA are treated with strict confidentiality. "Strict confidentiality" means that the identity of the reporting party will not be disclosed to anybody outside of the Ethics Office and the Office of Audit and Oversight, unless the reporting party

consents to disclosure or where allegations were made in bad faith or where disclosure is deemed necessary by IFAD to fulfill due process requirements in the investigation process or when there is a clear and imminent danger to the life or health of a person.

20. IFAD ensures a prompt response to all reported allegations of sexual harassment and SEA. The Ethics Office reviews and monitors reported allegations of sexual harassment or SEA. Upon receipt of an allegation, the Ethics Office conducts a preliminary assessment of the allegation. If this assessment shows prima facie elements of unacceptable behaviour including sexual harassment and/or SEA that merits further proceedings, the Ethics Office refers the matter to the Office of Audit and Oversight, which is the authority in IFAD entrusted with investigative functions.

21. During an initial review, the Ethics Office may recommend to the President interim measures to protect a whistleblower from retaliation. Similarly, upon recommendation from the Ethics Office, the Office of Audit and Oversight and the Human Resources Division, the President may take interim measures to protect staff members, individuals holding a work contract with IFAD or beneficiaries.

22. IFAD recognizes that reporting allegations of sexual harassment and/or SEA can be difficult. Persons who have in good faith reported allegations of sexual harassment and/or SEA or cooperated with a sexual harassment and/or SEA investigation may seek protection under IFAD's Whistleblower Protection Procedures.

## **2. Establish and maintain an appropriate response mechanism**

### ***a) Investigations***

23. The Office of Audit and Oversight is responsible for reviewing and investigating allegations of sexual harassment and SEA. Cases involving allegations of sexual harassment and SEA are considered high-priority cases.

24. The Office of Audit and Oversight conducts its investigations in line with best practices for sexual harassment and SEA investigations and is sensitive to the delicate nature of the allegations. Where appropriate, the Office of Audit and Oversight may hire external experts to assist in the investigation and/or liaise with local authorities.



25. IFAD staff and any individuals holding a work contract with IFAD have a duty to cooperate unreservedly with any review or investigation of allegations of sexual harassment and/or SEA and shall respond promptly and fully to requests for information. IFAD staff and other individuals holding a work contract with IFAD are expected to provide any additional relevant information that might be unknown to the Office of Audit and Oversight, whether or not requested to do so. A failure to cooperate with an investigation may constitute misconduct.

26. IFAD staff and individuals holding a work contract with IFAD who are under investigation for potential sexual harassment and/or SEA may be temporarily removed from their position, pending the investigation.

27. Upon closure of an investigation, the Office of Audit and Oversight issues a final report to the President, explaining its findings and conclusions. If any allegations are substantiated, the matter is referred to the Sanctions Committee for review of the matter in accordance with the applicable disciplinary proceedings.

***b) Disciplinary measures against IFAD staff and other individuals holding a work contract with IFAD***

28. Disciplinary measures are applied to IFAD staff who are found to have engaged in acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA at IFAD or in connection with an IFAD-funded or -managed activity or operation. Acts of sexual harassment and SEA are considered serious misconduct and can be grounds for summary dismissal.

29. Sanctions, such as immediate termination of contract and debarment, are imposed by the Sanctions Committee against individuals holding a work contract with IFAD who are found to have engaged in acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA.

30. Disciplinary measures or sanctions are also applied to IFAD staff and any individual holding a work contract with IFAD who fails to report acts of sexual harassment or SEA in a timely manner or who encourages or condones acts of sexual harassment or SEA at IFAD or in connection with an IFAD-funded or -managed activity or operation.

31. Disciplinary measures or sanctions are further applied to IFAD staff and any individual holding a work contract with IFAD who knowingly makes a false report of sexual harassment and/or SEA with an intent to harm the reputation of another person or of IFAD.

32. Where IFAD has reason to believe that laws of a country may have been violated, the President may decide to refer matters involving substantiated acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA to national authorities for purposes of criminal proceedings, as appropriate. In this context, the President may decide to waive the functional immunities of the implicated staff member or other persons or records relevant to the investigation.

***c) Measures regarding the conduct of project staff and third parties in IFAD-funded operations***

33. IFAD ensures to reflect its no-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment and SEA in its activities and operations. To this end, Recipients of IFAD funding are expected to immediately inform IFAD of any allegations of sexual harassment 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.

34. IFAD requires Recipients of IFAD funding to include, in all contracts with project staff, contractors, suppliers and other third parties to be funded with IFAD funds: (i) provisions prohibiting acts of sexual harassment and SEA, (ii) provisions establishing an obligation to immediately report to IFAD or the Recipient incidents of sexual harassment 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 sexual harassment and/or SEA in connection with IFAD-funded or -managed activities or operations.

***d) Measures regarding the conduct of suppliers in commercial contracts with IFAD***

35. IFAD ensures that all its commercial contracts include: (i) a clear prohibition of sexual harassment and SEA, (ii) disclosure requirements regarding previous convictions, disciplinary measures, sanctions or investigations regarding sexual harassment and SEA, (iii) a duty to immediately report incidents of sexual harassment and SEA in relation with the activities funded by the contract with IFAD, and (iv) grounds for immediate termination of contract based on proven acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA in connection with the contract with IFAD.

**3. Prevention and monitoring**

***a) Outreach and communication***

36. IFAD ensures robust communications to support effective implementation of this Policy across the Fund and in its activities and operations and to raise awareness of the issue of sexual harassment and SEA and its potential impact on IFAD's development mandate.

37. The outreach and communication efforts are monitored and shall ensure that sexual harassment and SEA materials are distributed at all levels of the Organization, that materials informing representatives of recipients of IFAD funding, including project staff, third parties implementing IFAD-funded or -managed activities or operations, and beneficiary communities are distributed, and that appropriate tools and channels are used for awareness raising on the issue of sexual harassment and SEA.

38. IFAD may liaise with other International Organizations, think tanks, government agencies and not-for-profit organizations to jointly work on the prevention and response to sexual harassment and SEA in rural development. In particular, IFAD works to build commitment among its partners at all levels, including local governments and cofinancing institutions, to protect vulnerable persons from sexual harassment and SEA-related risks in the development context.

### ***b) Due diligence and background checks***

39. No offer of appointment shall be made to any applicant who seeks to work for IFAD before an appropriate background check has been completed. This background check includes questions regarding criminal convictions, disciplinary measures, sanctions or investigations relating to sexual harassment and SEA. IFAD reserves the right to withdraw any offer of employment or to terminate any contractual engagement if an applicant is found to have provided untruthful information concerning any condemnation regarding acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA.

40. IFAD maintains a record of IFAD staff and other individuals who held work contracts with IFAD who were found to have engaged in acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA in relation with their work for IFAD. IFAD also maintains a record of IFAD staff and other individuals who held a work contract with IFAD who have been convicted of acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA by national authorities or who have received a disciplinary measure or sanction for acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA by another International Organization. IFAD may disclose information about acts of sexual harassment and/or SEA on record if so requested by another United Nations agency or by a third party in a selection process.

41. IFAD incorporates in its due diligence of Vendors background checks and disclosure requirements regarding criminal convictions, disciplinary measures, sanctions and investigations relating to sexual harassment and SEA of their personnel and sub-contractors.

### ***c) Trainings and workshops***

42. The Ethics Office has strengthened its anti-harassment training programme and developed a mandatory e-training specific module on the issue of SEA to be completed by all IFAD staff and individuals holding a work contract with IFAD. SEA training is also an integral part of IFAD's Operations Academy programme.

43. Specific workshops and other awareness-raising events are organized periodically internally in IFAD as well as for project staff, third parties implementing IFAD-funded or -managed activities and operations, and beneficiary communities.

*d) SEA risk assessment in project design and supervision missions*

44. Social, environmental and climate risk assessments are conducted for each IFAD-funded project at an early stage of design and include a SEA risk assessment. This risk assessment identifies the potential SEA risks associated with the project, determines relevant measures to avert the risks, and identifies service providers for victims of SEA. Additionally, SEA-related issues are included in supervision and support missions.

**4. Support to affected persons**

45. Affected persons can seek support from the Ethics Office, human resources officers, supervisors/managers, the Staff Counsellor, a qualified psychologist, and staff representatives of the Executive Committee of the IFAD Staff Association. In addition, they may be supported by someone of their own choice throughout the internal processes.

46. With respect to beneficiaries who are victims of SEA, and in line with the General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/62/214) on the “United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel”, support to the victims is provided through existing services, programmes and their networks.

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