

IFI update on the Joint Statement on Continuous Advancement of Standards to Prevent Sexual Harassment, Abuse, and Exploitation

In a meeting on 21 April 2018 convened by Sigrid Kaag, the Netherlands Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, and Penny Mordaunt, UK Secretary of State for International Development, 10 International Financial Institutions (IFIs) reaffirmed their commitment to prevent sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation, both within their own institutions and in their operations. The IFIs represented included the Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, International Finance Corporation, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.

Recognising the important role they play in both the example they set in their own institutional practices and in the high standards they adopt in their projects and operations, in April, the IFIs reaffirmed their commitment to advance standards to prevent sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation through seven principles.

This update note provides a snapshot of the work IFIs are doing to promote, implement and reinforce efforts to give effect to the seven principles, including existing work and work that has stepped-up and became more specific since the April 2018 meeting. This update is not exhaustive and there may be other actions, planned updates and day-to-day practices to prevent sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation that are not captured here. Leadership is critical to ensuring these actions are implemented across institutions.

Underlying these efforts is a commitment to strive towards global best practice in effective prevention and management of sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation. Consideration should be given to the needs of survivors and appropriate protection provided for whistle-blowers.

IFIs use a range of terms to refer to issues that are relevant to sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation, including gender-based violence, social safeguards, misconduct, gender and inclusion more generally, and human rights. This update note captures policies that address the topic substantively, but individual IFI terminology may not match exactly the references made here.

IFIs reaffirm their commitment to:

Principle 1: Foster a culture of respect and high standards of ethical behaviour across institutions.

Implementation of this principle can be seen in the following:

- All IFIs maintain codes of ethics/conduct, to which staff must adhere, and which set out requirements for staff to observe high standards of integrity and ethical conduct, which are applicable to staff's behaviour both within and outside the institution. Many of the IFIs' codes are available publicly online, and are supported by mandatory training for staff (see further Principle 6).
- IFIs have carried out cultural campaigns and promotion of core values, including in communications from senior leadership, and have hosted staff events to create and foster expectations of high ethical behaviour.
- Some IFIs have run, or are soon rolling out, staff surveys on this topic to better identify and subsequently act on areas for improvement.

Principle 2: Establish and maintain standards aimed at preventing sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation and other forms of misconduct.

Implementation of this principle can be seen in the following:

- All IFIs maintain codes of ethics/conduct which embed high ethical standards, and include provisions on harassment and misconduct including sexual misconduct which are applicable to staff behaviour both within and outside the institution. Some IFIs have also adopted specific policies aimed at preventing and responding to sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. These are applicable to all staff and are reviewed periodically and strengthened as needed.
- Some IFIs include behavioural clauses in contracts of appointment for non-staff members (including consultants, contractors) to ensure that they too adhere to expected high standards of behaviour. Breach of such provisions would provide an IFI with a right to terminate the underlying contract.

Principle 3: Provide a safe and trusted environment for those affected by sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation to step forward to report incidents and concerns, with the assurance that they will be treated respectfully and consistently.

Implementation of this principle can be seen in the following:

- All IFIs have confidential reporting channels available. Most IFIs allow for anonymous and confidential reporting of complaints and maintain multiple channels through which staff can report concerns about misconduct (including ethics or compliance offices, human resources departments, independent employee assistance programmes, respectful workplace units, ombudsperson offices, and/or mediation offices). Staff are either encouraged or mandated to report suspected misconduct. All reports are reviewed and managed in accordance with an IFI's respective internal rules which include protection from all forms of retaliation.

Principle 4: Provide protection for those affected, as well as whistle-blowers and/or witnesses within their institutions, and to take appropriate measures against any form of retaliation.

Implementation of this principle can be seen in the following:

- IFIs recognise that whistle-blowing is an important tool and a critical aspect of good governance and have policies and/or procedures which provide for whistle-blower protection. For example, most IFIs' codes of ethics/conduct state that any form of retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports allegations of misconduct, is itself a form of misconduct.
- Some IFIs are currently reviewing their whistle-blower policies/procedures to ensure that they remain relevant to today's landscape.

Principle 5: Maintain robust policy frameworks and clear institutional mechanisms that address how incidents and allegations will be handled should they arise.

Implementation of this principle can be seen in the following:

- IFIs have in place or are developing clear accountability mechanisms to respond to reports of incidents and allegations of misconduct including sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation. IFIs ensure that procedures for all allegations, and especially serious allegations with respect to sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation, are followed swiftly and effectively, concluding promptly where feasible, and treating complainants with respect.
- Many IFIs report, in aggregate and anonymously, on the number and types of cases of misconduct investigated to their Boards and publicly as part of their annual reports.

- IFIs may refer misconduct to national authorities where considered appropriate.

Principle 6: Provide effective training programmes so all staff understand the requirements and standards of behaviour expected of them as international civil servants.

Implementation of this principle can be seen in the following:

- Training on codes of ethics/conduct and harassment and misconduct issues is included as part of all IFIs staff on-boarding and induction procedures, which includes clear expectations on ethical behaviour and an explanation of consequences for non-compliance with the codes of ethics/conduct. Many IFIs have dedicated mandatory ethics training sessions, as part of or in addition to, the induction process.
- Many IFIs also have ongoing refresher training programmes or sensitisation campaigns for all staff on compliance with the codes of ethics/conduct in the form of online and/or classroom training courses, and specialised courses for managers and supervisors.
- For many IFIs, these training programmes have been recently revised, or are in the process of being revised, to more explicitly address the topic of sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation.
- IFIs are also making additional efforts to roll out training to regional and country offices and hubs to ensure that the culture of high ethical standards and training is implemented organisation-wide, not just at headquarters.
- IFIs share training and knowledge materials to develop a wider perspective on best practice for training and policy setting.

Principle 7: Support clients to develop and implement policies and mechanisms that address sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation.

In IFI' operations, implementation of this principle can be seen in the following:

- IFIs have environmental and social policies, which implicitly and explicitly mandate clients to take measures to prevent and address sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation. As part of project due diligence, IFIs assess related risks and impacts and determine how these will be addressed in the design and implementation of a project. Where IFIs are supporting a program, some IFIs aim to support strengthening of the country's systems and policies that address sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation.
- Some IFIs are in the process of integrating dedicated risk management measures into operations as linked to environmental and social policies, and other operational requirements. Other IFIs are in the process of reviewing or will review environmental and social policies to address more specific risks of sexual misconduct and/or gender-based violence.
- Many IFIs provide guidance, training and materials to support environmental and social specialists in the application and monitoring of compliance with environmental and social policies, including requirements for clients to take measures to prevent and address sexual misconduct.
- Many IFIs require that contractors engaged in a project operate in a manner consistent with IFIs' environmental and social policies. Assessment of the environmental and social risks and impacts associated with such contractors are being made more explicit and improved. Some IFIs have guidelines for the procurement and management of contractors that require contractors having

systems in place for preventing sexual misconduct, and for better managing incidents if allegations arise.

- IFIs have project grievance, independent accountability or other reporting mechanisms that enable confidential reporting of incidents and concerns including of sexual harassment, abuse or exploitation or other related misconduct by those outside the IFI, including but not limited to communities affected by projects/programs.
- In addition, IFIs require clients to develop their own worker and community grievance mechanisms that are designed to receive and facilitate the resolution of concerns and grievances of project-affected parties arising in connection with a project. This support may include but not be limited to guidance notes, expert support in training of clients' staff, establishing resolution and support mechanisms
- As part of wider efforts across the IFIs to address gender-based violence as a development challenge, many IFIs finance projects/programs that proactively support client and community capacity to improve safety, and implement gender-based violence prevention and response.

Work of IFIs since April 2018 and going forward to continue to implement these principles

Since the meeting in April 2018, IFIs have continued to actively work to address sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation and related forms of misconduct, both internally within their own institutions and through their operations. IFIs are committed to performing their functions with the highest level of ethics and integrity, and the upholding of their value system requires cooperation across the institutions. Reflecting that ownership is embedded across institutions, a wide range of staff is involved in the formulation of strategy, design and application of policies to tackle these issues, including staff in ethics and compliance offices, human resources, procurement, legal teams, gender and inclusion specialists, and social safeguarding experts.

Since April, IFIs have a renewed focus and ambition to deepen their engagement to advance standards on sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation. They often do this work through joint working groups (although the composition of IFIs in working groups can vary and sometimes is wider than just those 10 IFIs listed at the top of this document). In each working group, there have been ongoing discussions on learning from each other, sharing resources and leveraging each other's experience to make changes, as appropriate.

For example, the DFI Social Experts Meeting in September 2018 discussed due diligence with a gender lens, with a special focus on preventing and combatting sexual exploitation and abuse in investments. This was an opportunity for IFIs to discuss what best practice IFIs can promote through their investments. The experts agreed to share information on developments and lessons learnt in this area, and prepare tools and other resources, adopting harmonised approaches as appropriate.

As a further example, ethics representatives from a wide range of multilateral organisations participated in a conference hosted by the United Nations in July 2018 that included practical workshops on managing sexual misconduct cases, learning about other's approaches to protecting against retaliation, as well as enhancing whistle-blower policies. As part of both informal and formal networks, IFIs share training and other knowledge materials with each other to develop a wider perspective on best practice for training and policy setting. They will continue to do so as training modules are updated, as needed, to deal with preventing sexual misconduct more specifically.

IFIs will continue to promote the focus on this issue through these working groups as well as through institution-specific initiatives and actions, both internally and in their operations.