

Follow-up from the Fourth Informal Joint Meeting of the FAO Council, IFAD Executive Board and WFP Executive Board

20 October 2021

The Fourth Informal Joint Meeting of the FAO Council, the IFAD Executive Board and the WFP Executive Board (the governing bodies of the Rome-based agencies [RBAs]) was held on 12 October 2020. This document provides information on the following items discussed at that meeting:

- The Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change;
- The RBA joint country plans in three pilot countries (Colombia, Indonesia and Niger); and
- RBA Common Specialized Expertise on Investigative Functions Related to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

1. Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change

Background: Following the RBA Principals' visit to Niger in August 2018, the RBAs reaffirmed their commitment to scaling up joint efforts throughout the Sahel and to developing a plan of action for the region. The matter was further discussed and endorsed by Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, at the Third Informal Joint Meeting held on 13 September 2019. Subsequently, the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic led the RBAs to repurpose country-level activities and interventions to ensure food security in the region. To meet and merge this objective with the operationalization of the Sahel Action Plan, the RBAs designed and implemented the Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change (SD3C). The programme was launched in the first quarter of 2021 with the goal of mitigating the impact of these challenges (the "three Cs") and strengthening the overall resilience of six countries in the Sahelian region: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. In view of the alignment of SD3C with the Sahel Action Plan and the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), the RBAs agreed, at their Senior Consultative Group meeting held in April 2021, that developing a more detailed RBA Sahel Action Plan would not add value to the RBA work in the region.

Request: At the Fourth Informal Joint Meeting held in 2020, and at subsequent governing body meetings held later in the year, Members sought additional information on the SD3C programme.

Follow-up actions: The RBAs provided Members, on 23 June 2021, with the following jointly produced document: *Overview of the Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change*. (To read the overview, please click [here](#).)

2. RBA joint country plans in three pilot countries (Colombia, Indonesia and Niger)

Background: Since 2019, the RBAs have been developing joint country plans in three pilot countries: Colombia, Indonesia and Niger. The aim is to support countries in agreeing on defined priorities related to the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and related RBA collaboration to achieve them, within the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). Subsequent programmes have been designed as a result of these plans.

Request: An update on the RBA joint country plans was provided during the Fourth Informal Joint Meeting and in the 2020 Progress Report. Members subsequently requested further updates, which IFAD provided at the Senior Consultative Group meeting in June 2021.

Follow-up actions:

- **Colombia:** Although progress on developing the joint country plan was hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, work continued to move forward. As a result, the UNSDCF was signed recently and the Colombia teams met at the end of March at a workshop to assess the joint activities that had taken place in 2020 and to develop a roadmap for 2021.
- **Indonesia:** The joint country plan, which is aligned with the UNSDCF 2021-2025, was endorsed by the Ministry of Planning in July 2021. The plan outlines four expected outcomes and promotes a sustainable food systems approach that delivers economic opportunities for all along the value chain and provides affordable diversified food to meet new and increasing consumer demand for nutritious and healthy diets for all. The plan has a specific focus on gender equality, women's empowerment and inclusion of other disadvantaged groups across its outcomes. A concept note has also been developed for a pilot project and a framework for enhanced cooperation.
- **Niger:** The RBA Niger country teams are currently reviewing the final draft. However, due to the presidential elections held in March 2021, consultations with the Government have been postponed. With the Plan nearly final, an action plan has been developed; however, due to COVID-19, implementation has been halted.

An evaluation of the three pilot countries and subsequent pilot initiative was included in the Joint Evaluation of Collaboration among the United Nations Rome-based Agencies. The evaluation notes, in recommendation 2(e): "The RBAs should monitor the finalization and implementation of their three pilot joint country strategies, assess their value in the context of the UNSDCF, and formally review whether the preparation of more such strategies is warranted." Accordingly, the RBAs plan to assess the value of the pilot and determine the next steps going forward, in the light of ensuring the effective development of Common Country Analyses and UNSDCFs.

3. RBA Common Specialized Expertise on Investigative Functions Related to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

Request: At the 163rd session of the FAO Council held in December 2019, Members requested that the RBAs verify the potential added value of a common specialized expertise on investigative functions related to allegations of sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (SH/SEA).

Follow-up actions: An analysis was conducted, which showed that the bundling of this specific expertise would not be an effective use of resources. The Members were so informed during the Fourth Informal Joint Meeting and through the 2020 Progress Report. The RBAs addressed a subsequent request by Members for a written report with a joint statement, issued on 11 May 2021, entitled Joint Paper on RBA Common Specialized Expertise on Investigative Functions related to SH/SEA. (To read the statement, please click [here](#)). The statement illustrates the strong collaboration on training, sharing of services and knowledge already under way among the RBAs in the handling of SH/SEA investigations. The statement also details the findings of the analysis, which do not support the implementation of a common specialized expertise for this function, given the differences between the three agencies' business models and the composite nature of most allegations (i.e. SH/SEA allegations are often associated with other allegations).