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# FINANCE COMMITTEE

**Hundred and Eighty-fifth Session**

**22 -26 March 2021**

**2020 Annual Report of the Ethics Office**

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Ethics Office is pleased to provide the Finance Committee with its 2020 Annual Report. The report contains information on the advisory and preventive work of the Ethics Office in 2020, as well as its internal management.
- To increase ethical conduct and awareness across the Organization, the Ethics Office has handled individual cases, provided input to standard setting and policy advocacy, developed outreach material and offered dedicated training and education.
- Significant strides have been made in enhancing the visibility of the Ethics Office.
- The Financial disclosure programme was successfully run for reporting year 2019.
- Significant work has gone into activities on protection against retaliation and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), specifically through increased technical support and outreach to strengthen FAO's PSEA global focal point network.

### GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

- The Finance Committee is invited to take note of the Ethics Office Annual Report for 2020.

#### Draft Advice

**The Committee:**

- **appreciated the quality of the report and the analysis of issues presented, which covered the full range of responsibilities under the mandate of the Ethics Office, noting that the work carried out is of great importance to help ensure Ethical conduct across the Organization.**
- **welcomed the Director-General's and Senior Management's continued support to the Ethics Office mandate, noting that the tone from the top is instrumental in ensuring the Ethics Office will be successful in fostering an ethical workplace.**

## INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents a summary of the activities carried out by the Ethics Office (EO) from January to December 2020. The report of activities is organized according to the main areas of work: Individual cases; Standard setting and policy advocacy; Training, education and outreach; Financial disclosure programme; Protection against retaliation and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA); and United Nations Coherence. These headings for main areas of work have been standardized in line with other UN agencies.
2. In accordance with the Organization's oversight arrangements, this report was reviewed by the Oversight Advisory Committee and will be made publicly available through the Organization's website in a different format.
3. In March 2020 a new Ethics Officer took up duties cementing the split of the Ethics/Ombudsman functions previously characterizing the office. Significant efforts have been made since then to clarify and raise awareness about the distinct mandates of the Ethics Office vis-à-vis those of the Ombudsman.

## MANDATE AND MISSION

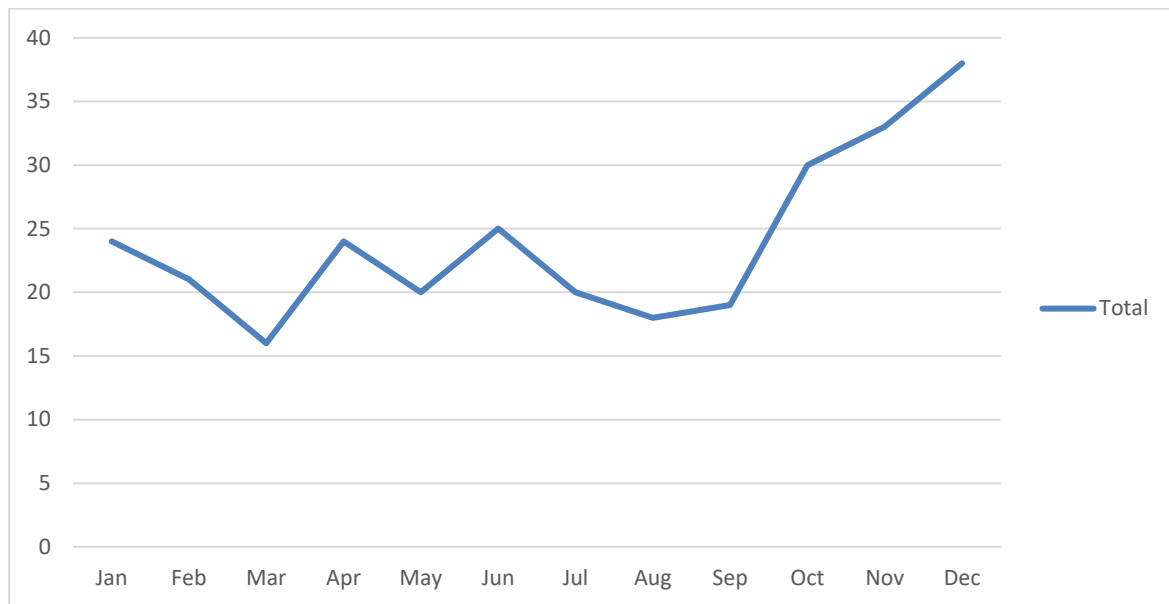
4. The EO was established in December 2009, pursuant to Resolution 1/2008 of the 35th (Special) Session of the Conference, in November 2008. From 2012 to 2016, an Ethics Committee acted as an advisory panel on ethics matters. In 2014, the position of Ombudsman/Ethics Officer was created, located under the Legal Office for administrative purposes.
5. In April 2019, the 161st session of Council endorsed the proposal in the Programme of Work and Budget 2020–21 to separate and enhance the Ombudsman and Ethics functions.
6. In March 2020, Ms Monde MAGOLO was recruited as Ethics Officer and the split of the two independent offices that have direct reporting lines to the Director-General became effective. From January to February, Ms Rachael RYDE, Legal Officer, acted as interim Ethics Officer.
7. The EO is mandated to foster a culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability to enable all personnel to perform their functions in accordance with the highest standards of conduct and to come forward without fear of retaliation when they witness misconduct.
8. Senior Management has been supportive of the EO's activities, with the Director-General advocating for improved wellbeing and ethical conduct in FAO.

## STATEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE

9. During 2020, the EO undertook its professional activities independently within the Organization. There were no limitations of scope which affected the EO's ability to discharge its responsibilities in handling of individual cases.
10. The EO collaborated with the Legal Office (LEG), the Human Resources Division (CSH) and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to address certain cases. Nevertheless, the advice and opinions provided by the EO remained independent of management and aspired to protect the interests and reputation of the Organization as well as those of the individuals concerned.

## INDIVIDUAL CASES

11. In 2020, 288 cases were handled by the Ethics Office (Figure 1). The general trend of number of queries per month was stable for the first three quarters, with a sharp increment in the last quarter. The case categories were revised to reflect the nomenclature of sister agencies, with an aim to provide a coherent basis of comparison in the future. Caseload comparisons with previous years will be relevant going forward, reflecting the split of the Ethics/Ombudsman functions and the categories.

**Figure 1:** Trend in number of cases over 2020

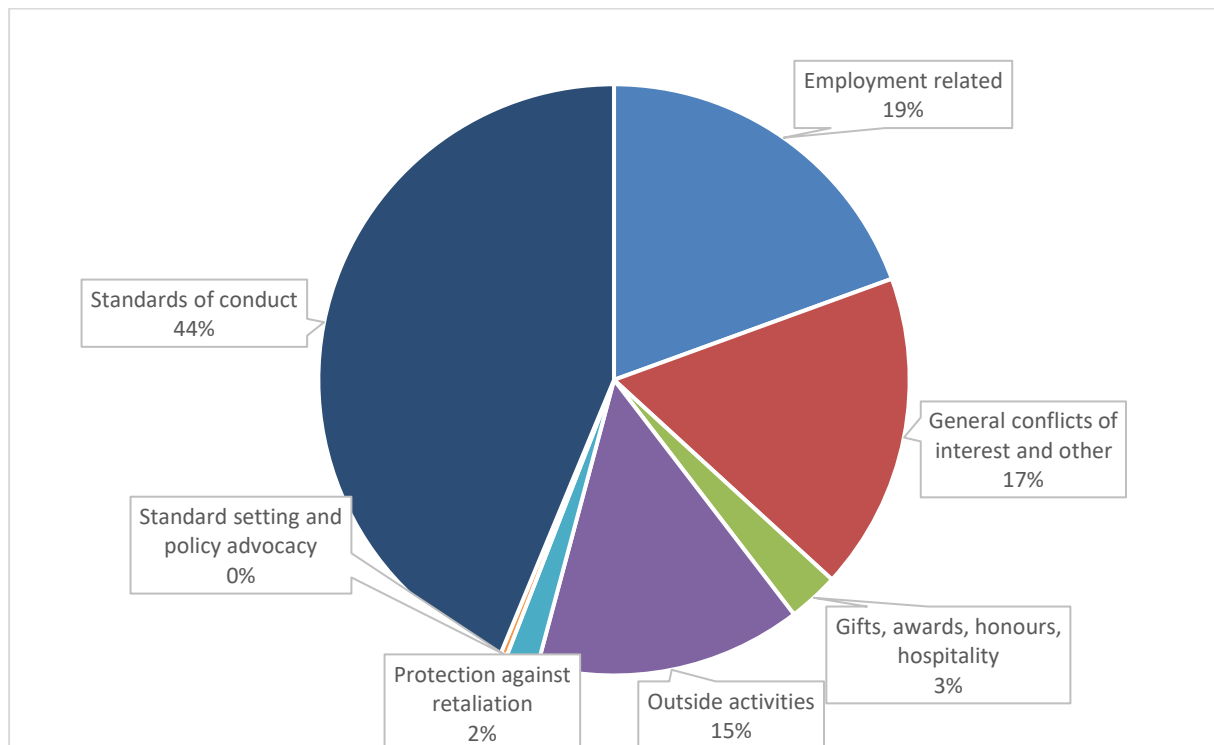
12. Just below half of the cases concerned standards of conduct including perceived harassment, abuse of power and sexual harassment (Figure 2).

13. Since the split of the EO and Ombudsman offices, the EO has made efforts to ensure that personnel who brought issues related to inter-personal conflicts, office controversies, perceived harassment or abuse of power, and sexual harassment were referred to the Ombudsman for informal guidance in alignment with the offices' distinct mandates. It is thus anticipated that the number of cases related to standards of conduct will decrease in 2021.

14. Three contacts related to sexual harassment were made to the EO in 2020. Although FAO's Zero tolerance approach was explained, the complainants preferred not to report the cases formally, as their primary wish was for the conduct to stop.

15. In this context, it is important to recall that the role of the EO is to promote an environment of high ethical standards and is thus a formal resource focused on prevention. The Ombudsman's role is primarily reactive to issues that have arisen, and a resource to help address matters in an informal way. If there is a case of alleged misconduct, this should be reported to OIG.

16. Several contacts were made with a view to seek protection against retaliation, where, however there was not in all cases a protected activity leading to the perceived retaliatory acts.

**Figure 2.** Percentage of individual cases by type

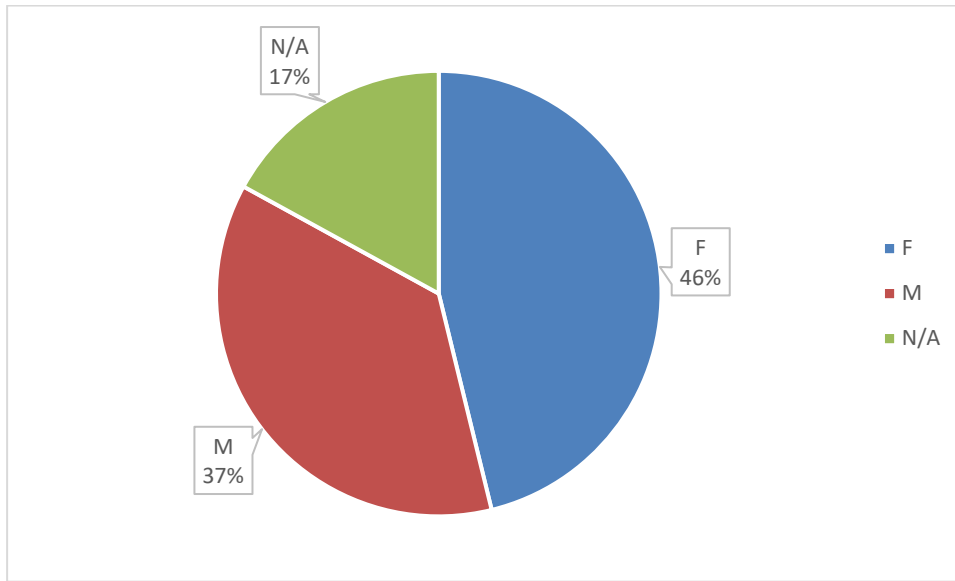
17. Following internal awareness raising in the last quarter, several contacts were made concerning outside activities and on gifts/honours (18 percent). Cases regarding general conflicts of interest accounted for 17 percent.

18. The EO received five requests for *prima facie* review of retaliation between 1 September and December 2020. Prior to this date, *prima facie* reviews were handled by OIG (Administrative Circular (AC) 2020/05).

19. There is a slight majority of women contacting the EO (46 percent) against men (37 percent) (Figure 3). The remainder of contacts were made either by anonymous or by management, where the gender is not recorded. The reason for this is that these contacts are of an advisory nature only and made by a representative of the office requesting the advice. Some offices contact the EO often because of the nature of their work (e.g. procurement), and recording the gender would therefore skewer the statistics in that the representatives are normally the same (i.e. the person handling that area of work).

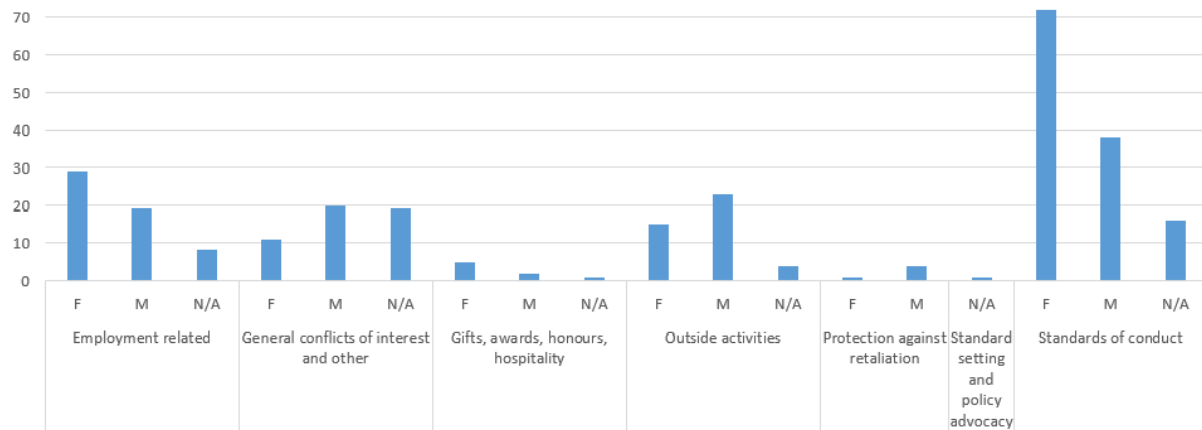
20. Management contacted the EO in 65 instances (23 percent), primarily in regard to seeking guidance on potential, perceived or actual conflicts of interest that concerned staff under their respective divisions, offices or streams.

**Figure 3.** Percentage of cases per gender

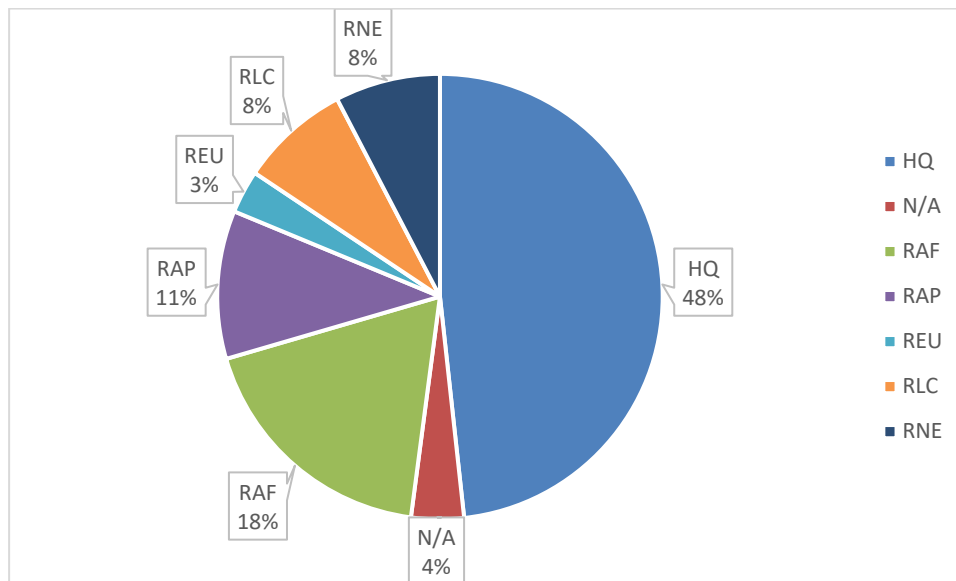


21. Figure 4 demonstrates that far more women than men contact the EO with issues pertaining to standards of conduct, whereas more men have requested endorsement to carry out outside activities.

**Figure 4.** Number of cases by category and gender



22. As can be evidenced from Figure 5, the far majority of contacts have been made by personnel working at headquarters, closely followed by personnel employed in decentralized offices under the administrative responsibility of the Regional Office for Africa (RAF) and of the Regional Office for Asian and Pacific (RAP).

**Figure 5.** Percentage of cases by region

23. The EO tries to respond to all queries and cases within five working days, and has responded to most cases within a significantly shorter timeframe than that.

24. The EO will look to modernize its case management system, possibly already in 2021, to ensure that statistical data can be drawn between years in a more consistent manner and that also response time is recorded consistently. Such a system will also help ensure institutional memory of the EO.

### STANDARD SETTING AND POLICY ADVOCACY

25. Fostering an organizational culture of ethics and accountability requires consistent, clear and solid policies that emphasize ethical conduct. To help this, the EO provided input to reflect ethical considerations in internal policies, practices and processes, just as the EO provided input to external stakeholders (e.g. UNJSPF code of conduct; A455 JIU Review of the current state of the ethics function; IASC Statement on Racism and Racial Discrimination in the Humanitarian Sector).

26. The EO is part of the **Workplace Integrity Network**, an Organizational group collaborating across different offices to mainstream and enhance ethical conduct in various areas of work and relations. The Network group was set up following the on boarding of the new CSH-Director, Inspector General, Ethics Officer and Ombudsman.

27. The EO is developing a **Code of Ethical Conduct** and a **Roadmap on where to go or whom to contact for workplace concerns**. The documents, which have been reviewed by a wide range of internal stakeholders and are being processed for internal approvals, will be important tools for FAO personnel to navigate policies, regulations and rules, as well as understand where to receive guidance on how to address any issues. They will help personnel understand the different mandates of offices.

28. In addition, the EO has reviewed and provided feedback to **policy documents**, including:

- FAO's Self-Assessment of Compliance with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Minimum Fiduciary Standards;
- Revised disclosure and declaration form for new hires/first time filling;
- Exit interview questionnaire
- Vendor Management Policy
- Annual Affirmations/Disclosure Form

29. The EO has undertaken a substantial **review of the following internal policies**, which are being reviewed by stakeholders:

- Gifts policy (to include clear guidance on honours, awards and favours)
- Whistleblower protection policy (to enhance clarity and distinction of roles and responsibilities with an aim to improve implementation)
- Retaliation report form and standard operating procedure for handling retaliation complaints.

30. In 2021, the EO will carry out a **conflict of interest (COI) mapping exercise** that should bring a clearer understanding of the COI affecting the Organization, including their paths and drivers, and sectoral or regional fragilities, if any.

31. In addition, the EO will review or develop policy and guidance on:

- Outside activities
- Publications (incl. blogs, articles) while employed by FAO
- Post-employment restrictions
- Personal relationships in the workplace.

32. The EO has had the opportunity to share upward feedback with Management through CSH, concerned divisions and Decentralized Offices on relevant matters arising. While addressing these individual concerns the EO identified lessons that FAO can draw from, namely the need to:

- enhance understanding on the implications of what may appear as consensual romantic or sexual relations with beneficiaries or colleagues.
- clarify the role of the various offices to which FAO employees may address concerns.
- improve awareness of managers' responsibility in ensuring a healthy and productive work environment, providing them with tools to resolve conflicts and respectfully communicate management decisions.
- strengthen, clarify and raise awareness about policies related to outside activities.
- raise awareness on personal conflicts of interest and the risks these can have for FAO.

## **TRAINING, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**

33. A strong ethical framework is particularly critical in a multi-cultural environment such as FAO that has an extensive decentralized structure. Guidance must be ample but also concise and clear, so that personnel understands the Organization's expectations towards them and they are able to abide by the rules and make sound ethical decisions. Outreach and awareness raising are critical to enhancing knowledge and, thus, compliance.

### **Training and education**

34. In October, the EO rolled out the **Leading ethically training**, offered virtually to all staff at the P5 level and above. Out of the approximately 460 staff at that level, 231 were trained.

35. The training was provided by an external company, QED Consulting, specialized in ethics training, and consisted of interactive case studies and discussions.

36. In 2021, a similar training (*Working ethically*) will be offered to 1500 employees (staff and non-staff human resources) between January and April.

37. The Whistleblower protection policy e-learning course was made mandatory in September with completion by 30 October 2020.



38. FAO personnel **completion rates for ethics-related training** for 12 970 employees are as follows (as at 31 December 2020):

- Whistleblower protection policy: 56.7 percent
- Ethics and Integrity: 55.1 percent
- Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: 70.5 percent
- Prevention of sexual harassment (video) 77.8 percent
- Working together harmoniously: 66.5 percent

39. As the trainings are for all personnel, achieving 100 percent completion rate at any given point is not feasible because many participants are new personnel who have just been signed up upon joining. There will thus always be, at any given time, new personnel who will still need to complete the training.

40. The EO will work with CSH to suggest ideas for how to improve compliance, for instance by reducing the timeframe given to complete the training, as this should help to improve the compliance rates.

### **Outreach**

41. The EO developed a **communications strategy and plan** for 2020/21 with the following overall desired outcomes:

- 1) Through enhanced awareness, FAO employees conduct themselves and carry out FAO operations in accordance with FAO standards of conduct.
- 2) FAO enjoys a good reputational standing as external stakeholders know that FAO operates with high ethical integrity.
- 3) Member Nations, donors and other external stakeholders trust that FAO spends its funds wisely, and operates ethically and efficiently to help achieve the sustainable development goals.

42. In alignment with the communications plan, the EO **briefed or participated in briefings** of colleagues in headquarters and Decentralized Offices to foster ethical thinking and operation, and, in some cases, to provide specific guidance on the way forward in regards to complicated situations. The following briefings were held:

- 1) RAP on the Ethics functions and key areas (July)
- 2) Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC) on Best practices on designing community-based complaints mechanism (PSEA) (July)
- 3) FAO Nigeria on key ethical concerns of the organization and UN in general (August)
- 4) FAO Dominican Republic on ethics and prevention of harassment (September)
- 5) Agrifood Economics Division (ESA) on ethics and fraud (October)
- 6) RLC on PSEA and Ethics focal points (October)
- 7) Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) on ethics and fraud (October)
- 8) FAO Democratic Republic of Congo on PSEA (October)
- 9) RAP / Staff Wellness Committee (SWC) on ethics generally (November)
- 10) Food Systems and Food Safety Division (ESF) on prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace (December)
- 11) FAO Yemen on prevention of sexual harassment (December)

43. In November, the **EO and Ombudsman held a joint internal webinar** on the differences between the two offices and on specific issues that may be brought to their attention. The webinar was very well received and had over 180 participants.

44. The EO published nine **articles** on the Intranet to increase awareness amongst personnel globally, these were:

- 1) Engaging ethics – introduction to the new Ethics Officer (April)
- 2) The importance of integrity – on the financial disclosure programme (July)
- 3) Protection against retaliation (September)
- 4) Sexual harassment or Sexual exploitation and abuse? (October)
- 5) Transforming FAO one ethical step at a time – on Leading ethically training (October)
- 6) Outside activities - an FAO policy explained (October)
- 7) Reflect, listen, learn, apply – a staff member’s account of the Leading ethically training (November)
- 8) A vital pillar – on webinar (December)
- 9) ’Tis the season – on the gifts policy (December)

45. The EO also participated in:

- International Fraud Awareness Week
- VirtualiTea on 2 November to discuss how to deal with racism and discrimination in the workplace
- Rome-based Agencies (RBA) 16-days of activism on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Our ability to protect communities on 1 December.

46. The EO was actively involved in the 15-person **E2S task force** through a representative from the office. The engagement was useful to help advocate for certain ethical solutions, as well as to raise awareness about what is planned or already being done in the EO.

47. The EO is indirectly supported by a **network of Ethics Focal Points**, who help raise awareness in the Decentralized Offices on the mandate of the Ethics Office and expected conduct as they function as a first port of call for issues at the local level.

48. In October, revised terms of reference (TORs) were shared with all Decentralized Offices and nominations for focal points for the term 2020–2022 requested. The TORs were translated into Arabic, French and Spanish.

49. As of today, 130 focal point nominations were received (for 159 offices). Support was provided on bilateral level to inform of the focal point role and more dedicated training will be provided in 2021.

50. The EO is developing a welcome package to focal points to aid them in their role.

## **FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE PROGRAMME**

51. The Organization’s Declaration of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme (FDP) was established when the 132nd Session of the Council in June 2007 approved an amendment to Article I of the Staff Regulations (Staff Regulation 301.1.10 and 301.1.11). Between 2007 and 2011 work was undertaken to set up workflow, questionnaire, risk criteria, and review approach of the FDP. In August 2011 Administrative circular 2011/20 was issued on the “Implementation of Financial disclosure programme Pilot phase”.

52. Administrative Circular 2012/15 and then 2015/18 implemented the programme at a corporate level and clarified that the “Declaration of Interest and Financial Disclosure” was a tool to assist FAO in identifying and addressing personal conflicts of interest (COI) for the purpose of mitigating or eliminating any such COI, to the benefit of FAO. It was not conceived and is not administered as a tool to uncover fraud or unjust personal enrichment. This is consistent with other disclosure programmes in the UN system.

53. Under the FDP, certain staff members are annually required to file a financial disclosure statement. These are all staff members at grades D-1 and above, FAO Representatives and Assistant FAO Representatives, and Heads of Offices. Other staff members are identified as required to file based on risk criteria that are defined as “involvement in the procurement of goods and services for FAO, involvement in the management of assets and accounts for which FAO has a fiduciary or custodial responsibility and involvement in the management of ethical matters, audit, investigation and evaluation”. In 2020, the FDP was revised to also include some non-staff human resource profiles (e.g. Special Advisers) as designated by the Director-General.

54. AC 2020/04 was issued on 20 July 2020 and the FDP launched on 31 August 2020 with an initial deadline of 25 September then extended to 9 October.

55. The FDP annual financial disclosure statement questionnaire requests information on the following: assets and personal property; stocks and related products; income from non-FAO sources; supplemental payments (gifts and outside activities); liabilities and loans; any interest in FAO vendors, service providers, or implementing partners; data for in-depth review of a limited number of financial disclosure statements.

56. FAO uses a secure Sharepoint platform for filing financial disclosure statements that ensures the appropriate level of data protection. This was updated in 2020 with the support of IT Services (CSI) to improve user-friendliness to the general functionality and the method of certification.

57. For the reporting year 2019, 495 staff members and consultants were identified as eligible. Of these, 146 contacted the Ethics Office due to technical issues or challenges in understanding the questionnaire. More than 330 emails were responded to.

58. The external supplier Hudson Ethics Consulting was responsible for confidential review of the disclosure statements. An interim report (based on a review of 99.6 percent of the statements) provided in December 2020 demonstrated that there was 100 percent submission compliance. In the reviews done, no conflict of interest was found for 471 disclosures. This group consisted of four categories: (i) “No Conflict Found” for 409 persons (83 percent) who reported financial interests that did not pose a conflict of interest; (ii) “No Conflict Found - Possible Appearance of a COI” for 29 (6 percent) who do not have an actual conflict of interest, but whose financial or leadership interests could give the appearance of a conflict of interest (see Table 1); (iii) “No Transactions Reported” for 27 persons (5 percent); and (iv) “No Transactions Reported confirmed by Staff Member”, for five persons for a total of 1 percent, and one case where a confirmation was pending for “No Transactions”. The external reviewer followed up with the 20 missing data cases and the final report is due in February 2021.

**Table 1.** Case reasons for possible appearance of a conflict of interest (FDP)

Case Reasons for possible appearance of a conflict of interest	Number	Percent
Leadership role in non-UN entity	2	6.90%
Relative works in UNS	5	17.24%
Spouse works for Government	5	17.24%
Spouse works in UN System	4	13.79%
Spouse + staff member work in same organization	13	44.83%
Total	29	100.00%

59. During the first review of financial disclosure statements submitted by staff, almost one third of the statements did not contain all the information needed to complete the review. The external reviewer had to request, sometimes several times, more information about items such as the complete description of assets, issuers of stocks, names of stocks and additional information on spouses' employment. Categories with the highest amount of missing data were assets, especially investments, outside income, and details of outside business and spouse employment. Other missing information was related to persons reporting a mortgage but not a corresponding real estate property, a rental property, but no rental income, investments, but no income from those investments, and similar. Queries and answers were made through the FAO email account that was dedicated to the financial disclosure review.

60. The external reviewer recommended that should the Organization decide to continue the full financial disclosure approach, modifications to the FDP should be approved to clarify the type of assets that are required to be reported.

61. Following the request to the EO by the Oversight Advisory Committee in their February 2019 meeting "to review the FDP and conduct a cost benefit analysis" with the purpose of understanding if the current programme is fit for purpose, such analysis was carried out and presented to Senior Management for consideration. The analysis was made based on a review of the FDP from its implementation in 2012.

62. The COIs identified through the current FDP are almost nil and it is the EO's view that the current FDP does not adequately reveal potential COIs, related, for instance, to relationships with vendors or engagement in outside activities, which are deemed to be carrying a high risk for FAO. Moving towards a conflict of interest disclosure programme would provide for enhanced risk management, more effectiveness and efficiency. A full proposal for a change to the current FDP will be presented to the Finance Committee following endorsement by Senior Management and the Oversight Advisory Committee.

63. The current supplier has communicated that the company will be dissolved in the first quarter of 2021 (current contract was set to expire in April 2021 but extendable), and a solution for the FDP programme for 2021 is therefore required imminently to enable the programme to be launched by 31 April 2021 as per AC 2020/04.

## **PROTECTION AGAINST RETALIATION**

64. The primary objective of the Whistleblower Protection Policy (WPP) is to ensure that employees can report misconduct and cooperate with audits, investigations and, in practice, proactive integrity reviews without being retaliated against.

65. With the new WPP issued in August 2019, the receipt of complaints of retaliation moved from OIG to the Ethics Office. However, due to the resource constraints and the onboarding of a new Ethics Officer in March 2020, OIG continued to be the responsible office until 1 September 2020 (AC 2020/05) when *prima facie* review was officially taken over by the Ethics Office.

66. A dedicated mailbox was created for retaliation complaints (Retaliation-Report@fao.org), in line with best practices.

67. Under the WWP, the EO is responsible for conducting a review of a complaint for determining whether there has been a *prima facie* case of retaliation and, if so determined, the matter is referred to the OIG for investigation.

68. Five requests for protection against retaliation were received between September and December 2020. One case was finalized in 2020 and no *prima facie* was established. The other four requests are still under review.

69. The establishment of no *prima facie* does not prevent a complainant from submitting a complaint regarding other alleged misconduct.

70. In addition, the EO provided advice and guidance on whistleblower protection. These cases were recorded as Advice and guidance, not under retaliation.

71. The Ethics Office initiated a review of the WPP in collaboration with internal stakeholders, with an aim to reflect the split of the Ethics/Ombudsman functions, align the policy to best practices and ensure clarity and practical application, with the overall goal to encourage a “speak-up culture”.

## **PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE**

72. The Ethics Officer serves as FAO’s senior focal point for PSEA, as per Director General’s Bulletin 2012/70. In Decentralized Offices there is a PSEA Focal Point network consisting of FAO staff members who serve in this role in addition to their normal tasks.

73. A Task Force on Workplace Conduct and PSEA was set up end 2020. It has two working groups: one on workplace conduct led by the CSH-Director and another on PSEA led by the Ethics Officer. Given the crosscutting nature of PSEA accountability within FAO, the PSEA Working Group has representatives from Procurement Services, CSLP (LOAs under procurement), OIG (investigations and reporting), Office of Emergencies and Resilience, OER (emergency and humanitarian response), Project Support Division, PSS (partnerships and projects). Other units such as Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equity Division, ESP (Gender) and Decentralized Offices have also been identified as key stakeholders under the PSEA framework.

74. The FAO PSEA Policy framework is in place (AC 2013/27) and has been strengthened by the updated WWP (AC 2019/06), mandatory training, and establishment of the aforementioned Task Force. Increased technical support and outreach is being provided to strengthen FAO’s PSEA global focal point network and a digital platform being created to promote exchange of good practice.

75. Following a face-to-face training campaign on PSEA at regional office level in 2019, follow-up trainings and bilateral consultations took place virtually in 2020 for targeted Decentralized Offices such as Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria and Venezuela. An “Accountability to Affected Populations Toolkit” containing key guidance and a compendium of checklists, menu of options, case studies and good practices was developed to support country offices with mainstreaming accountability to affected populations (AAP)/PSEA and gender into programmes, projects and initiatives. This toolkit has been presented during numerous webinars and meetings and its uptake is positive.

76. With the recruitment of a PSEA Consultant within the Ethics Office in November 2020 a needs assessment of PSEA focal points was undertaken and numerous tools and technical support delivered. These include the development of standard PSEA complaint intake and referral forms; risk and community profile-mapping tools; specific guidance, principles and tools for use with children, young people and disabled within the community; communication and community-based complaint mechanisms; confidential disclosures procedures; guiding principles for victim-centred assistance; budget outlines; and guidance for PSEA initiatives including survivor centred dos and don’ts.

77. Specific support to Decentralized Offices included:

- technical review and guidance to FAO Azerbaijan regarding the country office PSEA plan;
- supporting Uganda FAOR regarding mapping, complaint intake and submission and referral mechanisms;
- guidance to FAO Afghanistan regarding locally accessible complaint mechanisms and interagency liaison;
- guidance to FAO Myanmar regarding PSEA assessments and risks regarding implementing partners;

- review and significant technical guidance to FAO Lebanon regarding PSEA Network terms of reference (TORs);
- planning community-based complaint mechanisms, provision of advice and support to FAO Honduras to actively participate in local United Nations Country Team (UNCT) PSEA planning and activities;
- provision of detailed guidance and tools to FAO Kyrgyzstan regarding community-based complaint mechanisms and child/disabled confidential disclosure and consent considerations;
- multiple discussions and support to regional offices including in RLC where Spanish and French PSEA products and tools were provided together with additional guidance regarding key PSEA concepts and community-based complaint mechanisms;
- discussion regarding capacity gaps and provision of guidance and tools to regional staff in RAP; and exploration of support needs, expectations and advice to regional staff serving in REU and RNE.

78. Externally enhanced partnerships work included a highly successful RBA webinar in December on the role of the Ethics Offices in working together to enhance prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse. FAO has joined with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) who are partnering with Translators without Borders to support a needs assessment and awareness raising project to strengthen PSEA awareness raising and understanding among frontline staff and others.

79. FAO is also working with WFP to update and strengthen training for our PSEA focal points and to support joint understanding regarding referral pathways and victim centred approaches.

80. The EO has provided input to management reporting on PSEA. The UN Secretary-General requests all leaders at every level to certify annually to their governing bodies through a management letter, that they have: (i) fully and accurately reported all allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse related to its staff and affiliated personnel; and (ii) made available to its staff and affiliated personnel the mandatory training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as information on: (i) how FAO ensures that its implementing partners have minimum standards in place to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse; and (ii) the mechanisms established to ensure a victim-centred approach. In this regard, the End of Year Management Letter on PSEA from the FAO Director-General, Dr QU Dongyu, addressed to Mr Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations, dated 19 January 2021 has been posted on the Members' Gateway.

## **UNITED NATIONS COHERENCE**

81. The Ethics Officer participated in the 2020 Annual Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO) Conference, organized and hosted by the World Bank, which focused on the following topics:

- 1) Harassment (not sexual harassment): Innovative practices in promoting a respectful workplace environment free of harassment, abuse or intimidation.
- 2) Organizational ethics challenges: Procedure/protocol governing the admissibility of recorded conversations of staff members when one party to the conversation has not consented to such recording.
- 3) Analysis of emerging changes and innovations in Ethics Training and Awareness: What are we doing to raise awareness and educate staff in new and novel ways beyond standard on-line or classroom workshops?
- 4) Management of confidential information and report versus requirements from other oversight organs (Investigation, internal audit, or Human Resources). Where do we draw the red line?
- 5) Retaliation and whistleblowing policy.
- 6) A key-note speech was held on "Organizational Ethics in a Post Covid-19 Teleworking Environment – Challenges and Opportunities".

82. In 2020, the Ethics Officer leveraged on the ENMO network and frequently reached out to members of the network to seek best practices on a number of issues.

83. The ethics officers of the three RBAs continued ad-hoc sharing of best practices and knowledge with increased interaction through monthly meetings.

84. The Ethics Officer was also invited by the IAEA Ethics Office to participate, as co-facilitator, in a briefing on Workplace Conduct delivered to team members of the joint FAO/IAEA Division that is hosted by IAEA.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

85. The workload in 2020 was noteworthy. The reshaping of the office mandate and consequential work to raising awareness has been and will continue to be the primary priority for the EO.

86. The 2019 Global Employee Survey demonstrated that there is generally a strong need for enhanced knowledge amongst personnel around the ethical standards set out in various regulations and rules, including who does what and what can be expected from the offices and from the personnel. This corresponds to the information gathered by the EO and suggests that advocacy and outreach should be emphasized.

87. It has also become obvious that numerous policies need to be reviewed and developed to ensure the Organization's integrity and reputation.

88. The EO will work closely with other internal stakeholders to help FAO's transformation into a workplace where integrity, wellbeing and accountability are driving and motivating forces to ensure that FAO meets its overall strategic objectives.

89. FAO requires to step up its efforts in implementation of the PSEA policy and dedicated resources need be allocated to this work to counter the potential reputational risk for FAO.

90. The EO is in dialogue with FAO management to address the resource needs that the office faces, as the level of ethical awareness that can be raised by the EO, the number of cases, including *prima facie* reviews, that can be dealt with in a timely manner, and the policies that can be revised or developed will go hand in hand with the resources available.