



22 April 2024

UNFPA management response
to
Report of the Ethics Office 2023 (DP/FPA/2024/7)

UNFPA – Reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS Ethics Offices

Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS

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1. UNFPA management acknowledges with appreciation the work of the UNFPA Ethics Office, and for its continuous support to assist the Executive Director in cultivating and nurturing a culture of ethics, integrity and accountability, thereby enhancing the trust in and the credibility of UNFPA, both internally and externally.
2. Management congratulates the Ethics Office in the accomplishment of its mandated activities for 2023 and commends the Ethics Office for its work to promote integrity, accountability, fairness and safety for all UNFPA personnel.
3. Management takes note of the strategic focus for the Ethics Office in 2023 to promote responsible social media use, with an emphasis on the obligation to uphold professional standards, and avoid actions that could compromise the organization's activities, Management commends their work to (a) address the emergent risks and trends in social media, (b) promote proactive guidance to support personnel to make responsible choices that uphold organizational standards of conduct, (c) foster healthy dialogue and (d) promote transparency and accountability (through outreach, training and awareness raising campaigns and by providing advice to senior leadership).
4. We would like to commend the Ethics Office for responding to 322 requests for guidance from across the organization regarding ethical issues in 2023, compared to 373 in 2022. Management takes note that new strategies implemented to optimize resource allocation and empower personnel to navigate ethical issues effectively have shown promise substantiated by an increase in inquiries directly relevant to the Ethics Office mandate alongside an observable 28 per cent decline in inquiries for non-ethics concerns. Management welcomes this increase in transparency and accessibility facilitated by the Ethics Office.
5. Further, management would like to share its appreciation for the work of the Ethics Office, which included providing guidance and advice to staff, personnel and management; the administration of the financial disclosure programme; standards development, training and education, and for undertaking the preliminary review of requests for protection from retaliation.
6. Management notes that the Ethics Office received four requests for protection from retaliation. Management also notes that two of the matters were referred for investigation with recommendations for protective measures, which were implemented by the administration; one investigation was finalized and closed with a determination that retaliation was not established, and one investigation is ongoing. Management also notes that a significant effort has gone towards reviewing the merits of the allegations and areas of concern resulting in an assessment of insufficient information on two matters that were closed due to a no prima facie determination. Management values the contribution of the Ethics Office in helping to root out abuse of office and retaliatory behaviour in the workplace, and will continue to work with the Ethics Office to raise awareness and increase the reach of the Ethics Office and to encourage the use of these services.
7. Management notes the Ethics Office's role of managing the financial disclosure programme; the financial disclosure programme is an important tool for UNFPA to help identify, resolve and mitigate conflict of interest risks arising from staff members' personal financial assets, liabilities, investments and outside activities. Overall, the Ethics Office reviewed 1015 financial disclosures and responded to 127 disclosure-related queries (90 potential conflicts of interest were identified and resolved). In addition, 30 cases were independently sampled by a third-party verification, disclosing in four cases persons omitting to declare all of their financial assets and who were informed of this oversight and advised to ensure complete disclosure in future filings. Management

is pleased to report that no conflicts of interest were identified upon final review of completed declarations. Additionally, Management acknowledges that a review of the UNFPA Policy on Financial Disclosure and Declaration of Interest identified undeclared outside activities as the most significant risk for UNFPA personnel and resulted in a policy revision to include an expanded conflict of interest section. Management will continue to work with the Ethics Office to raise awareness and promote compliance with this policy.

8. Management notes with appreciation the focus on in-person visits to eight country offices, including those in the Balkans, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye and India to promote trust-building and to conduct participatory workshops on “inclusive ethics” and to further inform the development of inclusive and accessible reporting and support mechanism. Management congratulates the Ethics Office on successful training-related achievements, including the live training of 1,333 personnel delivered directly by the Ethics Advisor on ethics essentials, conflicts of interest, psychological safety, ethical use of social media, abuse of authority, and ethical leadership. Management further positively notes the launch of online and self-directed learning including 19 micro courses and an online toolkit for managers. Management celebrates that 65 per cent of responding participants reported satisfaction with the course, and that 100 per cent found the course to be a good use of their time.

9. Further, management recognizes the work of the Ethics Office for the stable compliance with mandatory online training at 71 per cent. We note that the compliance rate, relative to personnel numbers, declined slightly due to an increase in personnel numbers. However, management notes the cooperation of the Ethics Office with the UNFPA Learning teams and the launch of a new Learning platform in 2023 and looks forward to this improvement in technology. Management will support the Ethics Office to increase the compliance rate in 2024 to above 90 per cent.

10. Management recognizes the sustained focus on awareness raising and outreach activities and appreciates the Ethics Office efforts to maintain high-quality content with a consistent voice and brand identity and to promote open communication and engagement through channels such as the Ask Ethics platform, the Ethics intranet page and YouTube channel viewed by UNFPA personnel 30,700 times. The positive impact of this virtual outreach strategy has resulted in sustained staff engagement on a variety of ethics topics and is well-noted.

11. Management acknowledges and extends our deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Ethics Advisor, who will complete her mandate in June 2024. We thank her for the many contributions to promote and foster a culture of ethics and integrity at UNFPA. We thank the Ethics Adviser for providing her ethics expertise to the United Nations system entities and review processes through her participation within the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, established under ST/SGB/2007/11/Amend.1, and for her participation in the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations to ensure UNFPA ethical policies remain in step with best practices across the United Nations system.

12. Management further commends the Ethics Advisor for her proposing and leading the establishment of the UNFPA “Integrity Group,” a trusted internal justice system coordinated by the Office of the Executive Director that includes representatives from the Ethics Office, the Ombudsman, the Division of Human Resources, the Office of Audit and Investigation Services, and the Coordinator for Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation and Sexual Harassment. Management is pleased to note the Ethics Office’s ongoing engagement on a range of prevention

and culture change initiatives, including participation in the UNFPA Integrity Group, to promote a more survivor-centred, accessible, data-driven, transparent, accountable and trusted internal justice system.

13. Management takes note that for this reporting period, the Ethics Office is not submitting any management recommendations. Management further positively notes and acknowledges the Ethics Office regularly engages in an ongoing dialogue with management to make recommendations to strengthen the organizational culture of integrity and compliance at UNFPA. Management commends the Ethics Office on its commitment to safeguard the reputation of UNFPA as a trusted and respected institution.

14. As in previous years, UNFPA compliments the Ethics Office on continuing to strengthen the services that it provides under its mandated areas of work and will continue to provide strong support to its work. Management looks forward to a continuing fruitful collaboration to foster a culture of ethics and integrity in UNFPA.
