Report of the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes (UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/UNOPS/UN WOMEN)

1 January - 31 December 2011



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Introduction

The period 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011 marked the first full year in service of the Ombudsmen[1] for the Funds and Programmes, Ms. Mame Diagne and Mr. Helmut Buss. The motto of the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes, "working together to find solutions", aptly describes the solution-oriented manner in which the Office approached the opportunities and challenges during this period. The Office is entering its ninth year of operation and it does so with increased organizational support and recognition for promoting the enhancement of the quality of life in the workplace.

Intervention by the Office of the Ombudsman does not and cannot replace managerial accountability.

Through team-building, coaching exercises and workshops held during the reporting period, the Ombudsmen carried out various activities aimed at enhancing senior management's awareness of the importance of people management, particularly during change processes. The Office promoted mediation and facilitated discussions as an approach to addressing workplace issues such as abusive behaviour and serious interpersonal differences. The Ombudsmen found that by directly and actively engaging larger audiences, e.g., bureaux, regional and country offices, the lessons were more readily embraced and the entire staff felt personally empowered and encouraged.

The Office increased its outreach activities, participation in regional management meetings, and its presence on the intranet sites[2] of the Funds and Programmes. As a result, there is increased awareness of the services and the work of the Office. The broader dissemination of the annual report for 2010 (both in hard copy and electronically) in English, French and Spanish has resulted in greater visibility for the Office.

New developments during 2011 included (a) the extension of the Office services to UN Women, which became the fifth agency to be covered by the team and (b) a substantial rise in the number of cases – 515 cases, a 21 per cent increase over 2010. Limited human and financial resources required heightened dedication and active collaboration of the entire office team. Furthermore, in seeking to improve the services, the Office introduced a new feedback mechanism to measure performance. Although it is still in its early stages, it is anticipated that this process will bring new opportunities and challenges as the information is reviewed to draw lessons to be learned, reaffirm best practices, and address any outstanding concerns.

The cases received during the reporting period revealed that the function of the Ombudsman is increasingly focusing on addressing the absence of managerial responsibility or effective procedures as a means of addressing conflict in the workplace. This is even more apparent in cases of workplace bullying, harassment and abuse of authority. The absence of managerial responsibility and adequate procedures to address bullying behaviour increases the dependence on informal mechanisms such as the Ombudsman to deal with violence in the workplace. The challenging question is whether the Office of the Ombudsman is the only place to address bullying, harassment and abuse of authority or whether other organizational measures can also be effective.

In this regard, it is important to recall the difference in functions, on the one hand, of the Office of the Ombudsman of the Funds and Programmes, which operates in an informal, confidential manner to facilitate staff and management to resolve their workplace disputes themselves, that is, fulfilling the role of an organizational ombudsman, and, on the other hand, those of a classical ombudsman, whose role is to protect citizens against abuse and publicize findings and recommendations. While United Nations

[1] Use of the term "ombudsman". Originally a Swedish word used to describe a trusted intermediary, the word entered the English language in 1872. In recent years, a number of variations of the term have been used to make it gender neutral, such as "ombudsperson", "ombud" and "ombuds". The United Nations usage, following the language of General Assembly resolutions, is "ombudsman", the plural of which in United Nations usage is "ombudsmen".

[2] The Office web pages on the intranet sites may be found at: https://intranet.undp.org/unit/office/ombud/default.aspx for staff of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and UN Women. Staff from UNICEF can view the page on this link: http://www.intranet.unicef.org/iconhome.nsf/Site%20Pages/Page18.

ombudsmen share some of the functions of the classical ombudsman model – a hybrid role, as noted by the Redesign Panel – in that both are neutral, confidential and independent, there are some fundamental differences. Most importantly, part of the role of the classical ombudsman is the formal investigation of complaints concerning administrative acts or decisions of government agencies. This is not the role of an organizational ombudsman, who has the mandate to fact find informally but cannot carry out formal investigations. As a result, the conclusions of an organizational ombudsman do not constitute administrative decisions and cannot form the basis for administrative action. Nevertheless, employees increasingly request the Office to look into the conduct of an abusive colleague or the process of decision-making on the part of management even when it is clear that any action taken by the Office cannot lead to formal redress. Intervention by the Office of the Ombudsman does not and cannot replace managerial accountability. The implications of misconduct and the lack of accountability are considered in greater depth in section II.B. of the present report.

The Office continues to observe a trend in which management and business logic seem to take over control of the work environment at the expense of enabling staff to make a difference in the lives of the people the United Nations is working for. Senior management claims that the workforce is the organization's most valuable asset. This claim does not sound very convincing, however, in an environment that gives higher priority to rules and control mechanisms (closely knit and implemented by managers and consultants) than trust in the judgment, common sense, experience, skills and integrity of the people doing the job. The Office listens daily to colleagues who suffer from side effects of that business logic, be they stress, exhaustion, or de-motivation.

The senior management of the United Nations Funds and Programmes, as employers of choice, need to pay closer attention to the damaging effects and to the financial, human and reputational costs of an often self-fulfilling management and business logic. These elements risk standing in the way of real results in advancing the United Nations mission and ideals, which are the reason most colleagues chose to work for the Organization. It is essential that courage, vision, creativity, common sense, integrity and trust in experience and skills regain value. This also means that technical experts must have higher recognition and career opportunities in their respective fields. Phrases such as business-process re-engineering, cost-benefit analysis, evaluation, risk analysis, change management, measurement, quality control, performance, have become part of daily life at work in the Funds and Programmes. The effects of these activities consume a considerable amount of time of the Office of the Ombudsman every day. While many in positions of authority claim that such management tools make work more efficient and lead to better quality results, the Office of the Ombudsman suggests that the jury is still out.

The absence of managerial responsibility and adequate procedures to address bullying behaviour increases the dependence on informal mechanisms such as the Ombudsman to deal with violence in the workplace.

The Office of the Ombudsman does not suggest a sudden exit from management and business logic, recognizing that these tools have become an integral part of public administration and stakeholder support. However, the senior management of the UN Funds and Programmes, as employers of choice, should pay closer attention to the damaging effects and costs of management and business logic that are often self-serving and self-fulfilling.

Chapter I

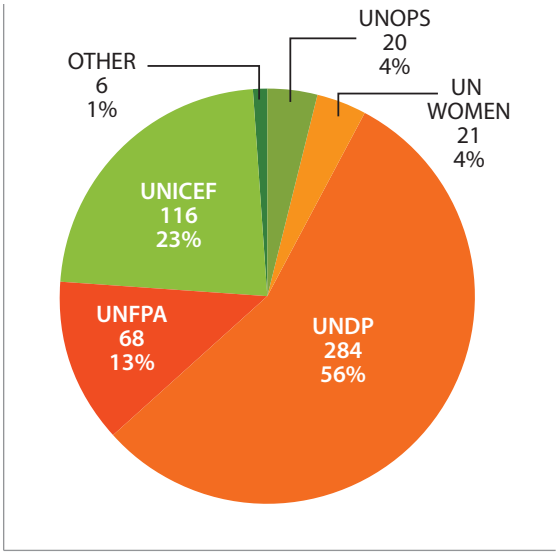
Overview of the work of the Office from 1 January to 31 December 2011

A. Overview of cases

The Office of the Ombudsman for the Funds and Programmes dealt with a total of 515 cases[3] in the period under review. This represents a 21 per cent increase in volume from 2010. A major contributing factor to the increase in cases was the Office's outreach activities, which led to a greater awareness of the services offered. Figure 1 shows a breakdown of the numbers of cases by organization.

Two main categories accounted for a large part of the issues brought to the attention of the Office of the Ombudsman: (a) evaluative relationships – 28 per cent and (b) job- and career-related issues – 28 per cent. The latter category has risen considerably over the years relative to all other categories. The key issues relating to both these categories are discussed in section II.C. and II.D. respectively

Figure 1. Cases received from 1 January to 31 December 2011

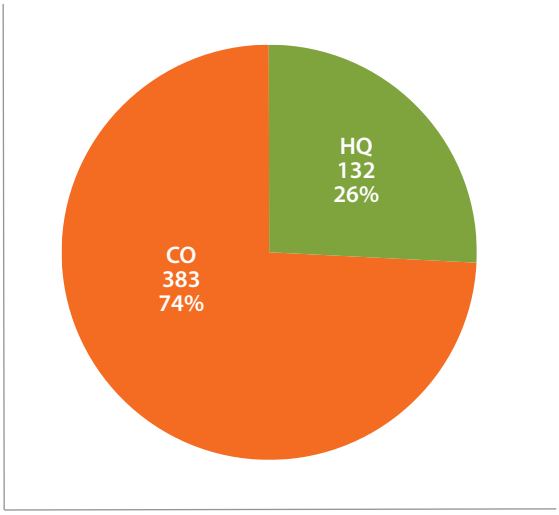


Note: Other includes cases from other UN agencies.

B. Field visits

In response to conflicts brought to their attention, the Ombudsmen visited a total of 12 countries in four regions. They organized several town hall meetings about the work of the Office of the Ombudsman attended by staff and management. In addition, the Ombudsmen conducted training sessions on conflict resolution for country teams of the organizations served. The Ombudsmen were encouraged by proactive measures taken by employees and management alike in some country offices to promote alternate dispute resolution and fairness in the workplace. Figure 2 shows a breakdown of cases that the Office received at headquarters and those they received from country offices.

Figure 2. All cases, 2011, country offices vs. headquarters



[3] Human resource departments report the numbers of staff as of May 2012 as follows: UNDP: 8,184; UNFPA: 2,304; UNICEF: 11,382; UNOPS: 866; and UN Women: 502. These numbers do not include the total number of non-staff personnel (consultants, service contract holders, interns, United Nations volunteers) whom the Office of the Ombudsman also serve. Non-staff account for 17 per cent of the cases handled by the Office of the Ombudsman during the reporting period.

C. UN Women: the first year and the joint experience

On 2 December 2011, the Ombudsmen had the privilege of addressing the staff of UN Women in one of the first town-hall meetings that took place in that organization. Created in July 2010, UN Women brought together four different organizations to deliver jointly on programmes relating to women empowerment and gender equality. The Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes is itself inter-agency in nature and can therefore draw upon its experience in harmonizing practices, logistics and cultures in the workplace. In this spirit, it looks forward to providing services to UN Women as the organization moves forward.

Chapter II

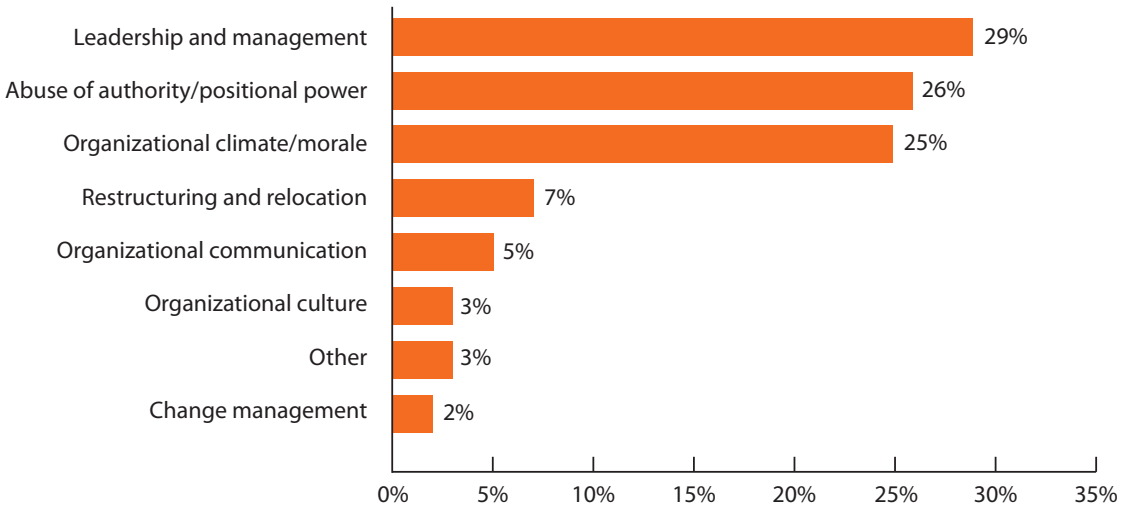
Observations and recommendations concerning the major causes of conflict in the workplace reported to the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes

A. Managing with a human face

The responsibilities of managing and leading an international workforce are complex and demanding. The Ombudsmen are pleased to report that they have met many managers in the United Nations Funds and Programmes who achieve great success and whose staff respond with equal dedication to fulfilling the mandate of their organizations. Nevertheless, a number of cases have come to the attention of the Office of the Ombudsman where, for a variety of reasons, managers have not been able to discharge their duties and responsibilities in an effective, acceptable manner. The results have ranged from severe interpersonal problems involving perhaps two or three people, to a near breakdown of communications and mutual respect affecting entire offices. Figure 3 shows a breakdown of cases that dealt with organizational, leadership and management issues. The figure demonstrates that the majority of cases in this category concerned the quality of leadership and management.

The Ombudsmen commend the Funds and Programmes for their response to the need for training to equip managers to operate effectively and successfully in the modern office. In particular, the resident coordinator assessment programme and coaching opportunities for those who assume the highest degree of leadership and management in the organizations are particularly relevant. Workshops, online courses and mandatory online certification – for example, in the areas of gender, mediation and ethics – also play an essential role in meeting the challenges and raising self-awareness of personal

Figure 3. Organizational, leadership and management



management styles, which is critical for anyone seeking to manage with a human face.

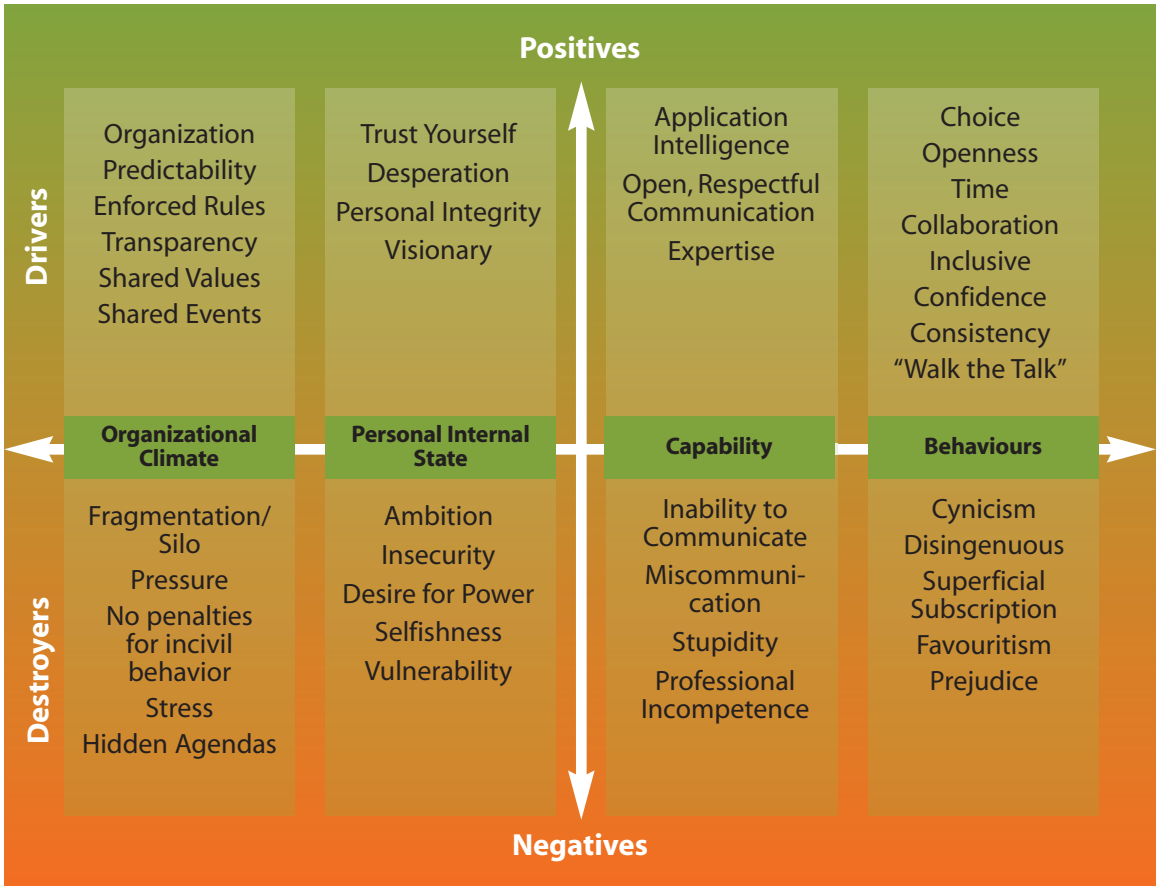
Successful leaders and managers in the United Nations are able to combine the requisite knowledge of the regulations and rules of the system, rapid and effective responses to the pressing needs of the international agenda and effective leadership with a human face. That is to say, they treat the members of the team with respect not only for individual attributes that have an impact on workplace relationships but also for the standards of the international civil service. It is most important to remember that it is only through working as a team that an office can achieve the most impressive results for the people and communities the Funds and Programmes are serving and for which the Member States pledge public money.

In those offices where standards of respect, efficiency and effectiveness fall short of what is expected from the United Nations, the Ombudsmen have noted a number of contributory factors.

First, the head of the office or the manager may in many ways have become isolated from most of the office, surrounded in cocoon fashion by a few trusted allies. The Ombudsmen have noted a number of effects of this. Most importantly, teamwork becomes less efficient because the great majority of staff members feel abandoned and soon form the opinion that they are not among the elite favourites. Next, individuals feel that they can no longer engage in effective dialogue with management because their views seem to be automatically discarded. In addition, trust breaks down and staff form a negative impression of the manager, an impression that is very difficult to overcome when remedial action is needed to restore balance and efficiency in the office. Figure 4 shows the complex elements involved in building trust in the workplace.

It is only through working as a team that an office can achieve the most impressive results for the people and communities the Funds and Programmes are serving and for which the Member States pledge public money.

Figure 4. Characteristics of trust



Adapted from Leadership and Trust Consortium project (www.toscagroup.com<http://www.toscagroup.com>)

Second, the Ombudsmen have found that when managers isolate themselves, general communication in the office can take on the aspect of imperious commands and ultimatums. The word comes from on high and the expectation is that staff will obey. This is far from the work ambience established by those managers who seek out the views and input of their staff on a collaborative basis. Striking examples come from the United Nations country teams: the Ombudsmen have received complaints from members of the team – who are themselves heads of agency in the country – that the Resident Coordinator behaves more like a resident supervisor. Instead of giving equal time to the members of the team for professional, informed discussion on emerging or ongoing projects and plans, the Resident Coordinator may act in what other team members perceive as a rude, perfunctory manner, pushing an agenda that may favour one agency or reflect a personal agenda.

Good management makes all the difference between, on the one hand, the staff understanding the process and accepting the tough decisions – however reluctantly – and, on the other hand, openly rejecting the decision and escalating the issue.

A further aspect of the problems caused by authoritarian leadership and management isolation concerns decisions that have to be made in accordance with United Nations regulations or policy directives from agency headquarters. In those cases where there is continuous, open dialogue at all levels in the office, the decisions are shared, thus dispersing any notion that the manager has acted on a whim. This approach is vital in situations where budgetary constraints require that posts be cut and projects discontinued. In the experience of the Ombudsmen, good management makes all the difference between, on the one hand, the staff understanding the process and accepting the tough decisions – however reluctantly – and, on the other hand, openly rejecting the decision and escalating the issue.

Open dialogue and an office environment where all members of the team can readily express their opinions with due respect are factors that also help everyone to acknowledge and understand the fact that the United Nations is a highly regulated organization. The Ombudsmen have found in all the regions they have visited in the reporting period that staff of the Funds and Programmes enjoy a sense of belonging to an organization whose charter and mission guarantee equality of treatment. It is when these principles are violated that staff feel a sense of disappointment, even outrage, that their managers have contravened basic tenets. At such times, they have turned to the Office of the Ombudsman seeking redress.

The Ombudsmen recognize that assuming a position of authority in the Funds and Programmes is no easy task, especially in a new duty station. There is a temptation to become very friendly with a few staff members at the expense of other staff. In some cases, a staff member may offer personal services – assistance with housing, buying a car, finding domestic help – to ease the transition of the new manager. Unfortunately, there are cases where a staff member may expect professional recognition (promotion, special treatment) in return for personal services. In the experience of the Ombudsmen, it is advisable for a new manager or head of office to make sure from the outset to treat all staff with the same respect and to avoid any signs of favouritism. In some cases where a personal bond, or at least the appearance of a personal bond, has developed very quickly (perhaps the new manager was lonely and was trying to make friends, with no ulterior motive), a feeling of betrayal may ensue when the time comes to draw a line between personal and professional obligations. The Ombudsmen have found that this can give rise to almost intractable problems in the office that can affect a large part of the workforce. Far from recommending a cold, impersonal approach, the Ombudsmen wish to signal that those leaders who manage with a human face succeed in maintaining respectful, cordial and effective relationships and do so in the most challenging duty stations.

Managing with a human face also entails professional respect for the whole person. The Ombudsmen received a number of complaints in the reporting period regarding sexual harassment or inappropriate behaviour. Clearly, allegations of sexual harassment are subject to formal investigation as a form of misconduct. Nevertheless, as advised by the current policies on harassment in the Funds and Programmes, staff may consult an ombudsman to talk things over and examine options in a safe environment. On some occasions,

it is possible for the Office of the Ombudsman to point to some options of action that may be helpful. For example, a staff member may be pressured to engage in sexual activity to guarantee a good evaluation – or to prevent a poor one. In these cases, it can be very helpful for the staff member to know how to deal with unethical and illegal demands in strict accordance with organizational policies and to be able to seek advice in a confidential setting. In other situations brought to the attention of the Office, there may be a physical relationship between the manager or head of the office and an employee. While it can be argued that consenting adults may engage in any form of legal relationship they choose, a liaison between a manager and a staff member within that manager's line of authority can have very damaging consequences for many people in the office. For example, the Ombudsmen have been notified of situations where a staff member who is in a personal liaison with a manager has attempted to wield in the office power gained from the liaison. The result is resentment from those staff members who suffer from this sharing of power, which can be used to settle old scores or to reorder authority in the office. Unfortunately, in situations of this kind, staff are very rarely willing to contemplate any action going beyond a confidential conversation with an ombudsman. This is far from satisfactory: the individual visitor may identify options to deal with the situation but the general atmosphere in the office remains unchanged. It is sometimes possible for the Ombudsmen to recommend that a management review be undertaken in view of the complaints received by the Office; however, managers who engage in quid pro quo arrangements may have taken elaborate precautions to protect themselves while behaving unethically. These measures include the threat of retaliation, which can be extremely powerful in an organization whose employees depend on their work not only as a livelihood but also on the visa that allows them and their families to remain in the country.

What can the Organization do?

Managers and staff at various levels have recommended to the Ombudsmen ways in which senior management may help in this area. For example, it could be very effective if from time to time the Executive Heads send global messages not only of encouragement for achievements but also reminders that with the privilege of serving the United Nations comes the responsibility to adhere to the code of conduct for the international civil service. This would provide a different, proactive aspect from that of the periodic reports on disciplinary action taken by the organization. Such reminders, covering different aspects – mutual respect in the workplace, equitable treatment, and ethical behaviour – would build on the sense of vocation that motivates the overwhelming majority of staff members.

The organization could also arrange for town-hall meetings, mandatory leadership and management training, workshops, retreats, brown-bag lunches to cover one aspect at a time of the successes of managing with a human face while analysing the obstacles that prevent it.

The Executive Heads could send a clear signal to abrasive managers that their behaviour must change and require that the administration make more pro active use of the Global Staff Survey to address inappropriate managerial behaviour

On the recommendation of the Ombudsmen, the administration could arrange for a management review that would bring to light the complaints received by the Office of the Ombudsman. It is important to note here that when an ombudsman signals, from confidential information, that a serious situation is pervading an office, s/he always does so in a way that will protect the identity of those who have been courageous enough to speak out.

What can the Ombudsman do?

There are a number of approaches the Ombudsman uses, depending on the complexity and seriousness of the case, the number of staff involved and the willingness of staff to engage in action beyond that of speaking to an ombudsman. For example, if the Office receives complaints from a large (sometimes overwhelming) number of staff in an office, the Ombudsman may decide that an onsite visit should take place as soon as possible. On arrival, the Ombudsman will hold a general meeting of all staff and management to explain the work of the Office and to invite staff to consult with the Ombudsman in strict confidentiality. The Ombudsman gathers information (and it is has always been the case that staff come willingly and in large numbers to speak with the Ombudsman)that gives an overall picture of the difficulties facing the work unit and makes it possible to present options for a way forward. This may be in the form of an action plan or it may be a

realization that something needs to be done that will require united action.

The Ombudsman may also engage the individual senior manager or managers perceived to be contributing to the conflict in a dialogue where options can be examined and where the crucial role of office leadership can be confidentially and effectively explored. Managers often welcome the opportunity to look at themselves constructively in the non-threatening environment that the Ombudsman creates.

It may be that a staff member feels threatened by the manager and is unwilling to go further than to speak with the Ombudsman out of fear of retaliation. Here, the Ombudsman can coach the staff member into understanding that there are ways in dealing with the situation without confrontation or escalation. This can be a very difficult, protracted process for the staff member and one that requires skill and patience on the part of the Ombudsman.

Throughout these processes, the Ombudsmen show that they are objective and independent. They also show that they are not an advocate for either party in the dispute but that they do work to help to bring about resolution in an equitable manner.

B. Misconduct and lack of accountability

The values that are enshrined in the United Nations charter: fundamental human rights, social justice, the dignity and worth of the human person and respect for the equal rights of men and women of nations great and small should apply not only to the Member States but also to employees who are contracted to serve on behalf of the United Nations. The concept of integrity promoted by the charter of the United Nations embraces all aspects of behaviour, including behaviour in the workplace.

Freeing the workplace from such violent behaviour requires more action from the organization than policy formulation.

Misconduct is reported through various established mechanisms. The organizations to which the Office of the Ombudsman provides services have legal frameworks that prohibit behaviour such as harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority. Words, gestures, or actions that tend to annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, or cause personal humiliation or embarrassment to another or that cause an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment are prohibited in all organizations. Nevertheless, freeing the workplace from such violent behaviour requires more action from the organization than policy formulation. It requires that leadership take responsibility to hold those who engage in harassment and abuse of authority accountable for their behaviour. Indeed, the Office of the Ombudsman is often surprised to read annual reports on disciplinary measures for misconduct only to find that there are few or no cases involving staff members who have been reprimanded for harassment and abuse of authority. Furthermore, organizational reluctance to hold some of its staff accountable for inappropriate behaviour has a disastrous effect on mechanisms that are designed to protect against retaliation. Staff have little confidence that the organization will protect them from retaliation if they report such behaviour.

The Office of the Ombudsman has further observed that staff are becoming more outspoken about reporting misconduct informally. When the Office brings the report of misconduct to the attention of senior management, the response is usually that management cannot intervene if a formal complaint has not been instituted. The procedures and policies that organizations have to deal with misconduct do not allow the administration to intervene unless a formal complaint has been made. It should also be pointed out that bullying, although not specifically mentioned in harassment and abuse of authority policies, is more prevalent than sexual harassment in the organizations served. It is one of the most serious forms of inappropriate behaviour in which people can engage without much risk of being held accountable. During the reporting period, many staff complained to the Ombudsmen about bullying in the form of verbal abuse, including threatening, intimidating and humiliating behaviour. This behaviour often emanated from supervisors and senior management. The organizations are often reluctant to confront abusive managers as more often than not they are considered indispensable because of their reputation for good programme delivery. Inertia on the part of senior management in situations where misconduct is informally reported has devastating results: unaddressed misconduct often causes low morale, reduced productivity, high attrition and high presenteeism. Bullying in particular can cause depression and stress disorders and has a severe impact not

only on employees but on their children and family, sometimes resulting in suicidal thoughts, which some staff have mentioned to the Ombudsmen.

What can the Organization do?

It is costlier to leave misconduct unaddressed than it is to explore solutions to address the misconduct in the first place. A toxic work environment brings out the worst in employees and has high implications for the reputation of the organizations. Addressing misconduct such as bullying relies heavily on strong leadership. When the Funds and Programmes recruit leaders, they should emphasize not only the need for technical abilities but should also require evidence of understanding, tolerance and integrity in the workplace.

The organizations should act promptly when there are valid reasons to suspect that harassment and abuse of authority, including bullying, are taking place in an office even when formal complaints have not been made. In this context, the organizations should consider bullying as a form of harassment requiring specific measures of protection.

The organizations should do more to ensure that those who report inappropriate behaviour are protected from retaliation. They should also address misconduct in a systemic way. For example, the Office has observed that bullying, harassment and abuse of authority by a manager are usually not isolated incidents in one particular office. It is highly likely that an abusive manager has repeated the same pattern of conduct in all assigned duty stations. The organizations should put in place programmes that specifically address misconduct in the workplace with special emphasis on the root causes of bullying. Leaders can support such programmes through mentorship opportunities and by demonstrating behaviour that inspires other colleagues.

The organizations should put systems in place for the active, periodic monitoring of sick-leave data, which will allow them to identify potentially risky situations arising from inappropriate managerial behaviour. They should then follow up on their findings with visits to offices with high absenteeism due to sick leave in order to ascertain whether the work environment is affected by managerial misconduct.

What can the Ombudsman do?

The question is whether behaviour such as bullying, harassment and abuse of authority can be adequately addressed through informal mechanisms. There is no clear-cut answer and every case must be reviewed on its own merits. In any event, the involvement of the Ombudsman is more effective and has a higher probability of success if the Office is contacted during the early stages of a disagreement.

The Office continues to offer itself as a tool to help staff and management who are dealing with difficult personalities in the workplace, for example, by coaching abrasive managers to adopt a more appropriate style. In doing so, it draws from its experience of instances where systemic solutions have been found to deal successfully with harassers and bullies in the workplace. The Office continues to be a resource to incorporate system-wide change to eradicate violence in the workplace.

C. Performance appraisal and management

1. Performance-appraisal mechanisms

All the Funds and Programmes have performance-appraisal mechanisms through which all staff are appraised on an annual basis with some attention paid to work plans, measurement of results, and identification of training needs. In some instances, there is acknowledgement for a focus on career progression. Organizations also have provisions for staff to rebut the findings of the appraisal in cases of serious disagreement. There is, however, little or no standardization of procedures and policies. Thanks to the organizational similarities between the Funds and Programmes, there are opportunities for close collaboration to improve the policies and procedures used for appraisal. While the individual characteristics of each organization must be taken into consideration, certain areas lend themselves to joint action, for example: rebuttal mechanisms, pilot projects for new systems, use of technology, and formulation of training plans.

Appraisal instruments are developed, used for a time and then reformed, usually over a three- to five-year period. This is costly in staff time and effort both on the part of human resources units, who oversee the development, and on the part of staff, who have to learn the new procedures. While it is commendable that the organizations seek to improve their appraisal efforts either through simplification or by use of new technology, there is often not enough attention paid to ensure that the

process is managed properly. If there is insufficient managerial and logistical support for a new performance-appraisal mechanism, neither staff nor management will take it seriously and any positive results may be minimized.

It is apparent from cases during the year that staff members have little awareness of what to do when there is serious disagreement on performance appraisal. Often they do not even know that they can rebut the findings of the performance appraisal. By the time the assistance of the Ombudsman is sought, it may be too late to intervene. There is even confusion about whether or not to sign the performance appraisal when there is disagreement.

What can the Organization do?

No system change can work if people who operate it do not change. In this case, an organizational culture of feedback is needed as a requirement for effective performance appraisal. Organizations should increase the use of internet-based tools to obtain continuous feedback from staff on performance-appraisal processes and mechanisms.

In view of the costs of revamping performance-appraisal systems, justification is important. The first concern should be whether the change embodies real improvement or whether it is change for the sake of change. Any new system should focus on simplification and it is critical that new systems not be introduced too often.

It is equally critical that all staff understand the new system. The Office of the Ombudsman receives staff members who are completely unaware of their rights in cases of disagreement over ratings or appraisal statements. A trial period and thorough orientation are absolutely necessary.

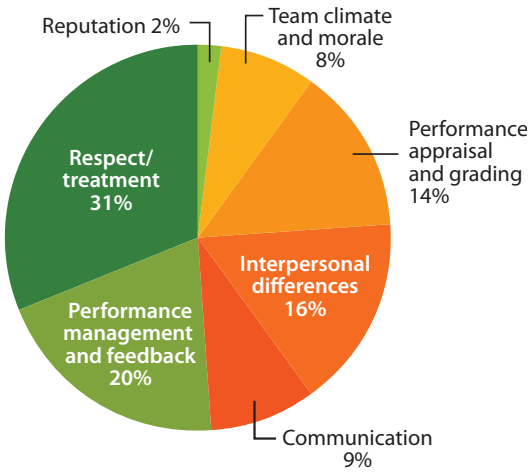
What can the Ombudsman do?

The Ombudsman can offer informal coaching to both staff member and supervisor in cases of disagreement to ensure that both are fully aware that the appraisal can be completed and signed even if both parties do not agree with some parts of the appraisal. While the Ombudsman cannot intervene directly, the staff member can be informed of the right to rebut and advice can be offered to ensure that this is done in a timely fashion. Tips on preparing an appropriate rebuttal can be offered in an informal manner without compromising the process. When the rebuttal process is unduly long, it is within the mandate of the Ombudsman to check with the rebuttal panel (or whichever mechanism is used) to check on the status of the rebuttal and report back to the staff member.

2. Performance-appraisal concerns

Staff concerns regarding performance appraisal have made up a significant part of evaluative relationship issues since the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsmen continued to deal with this type of case in 2011. During the reporting period, 31 per cent of the cases with which the Office dealt involved respect and treatment in the workplace. Once again, the Office heard that performance-evaluation mechanisms are often used as an instrument to subject staff to harassment, belittling and isolation. A full breakdown of the issues within the evaluative relationship category is provided in figure 5.

Figure 5. Evaluative relationship issues



Closely related to the process of performance appraisal is feedback on performance. This remains a persistent problem and in many cases still seems to be neither timely nor thoughtful. Staff members still complain that they thought that they were doing a good job only to hear at the very end of the reporting period that the supervisor is dissatisfied. Feedback should not be a one-time event but something that happens regularly during an assignment. Several cases during 2011 had elements of inappropriate behaviour where managers refused to speak to the supervisee let alone give timely feedback for the

performance appraisal. At this point, the appraisal process is akin to harassment, bullying or abuse of authority. Supervisors or managers may lay the groundwork for this kind of behaviour by isolating the staff member, humiliating the staff member in meetings or other office situations and exhibiting other sorts of undermining behaviour. This can result in having a ripple effect throughout the office, causing fear and a drop in productivity even on the part of other staff members.

The performance-appraisal process is also used when steps are being taken not to renew the staff member's contract. What is perceived as poor performance is not sufficient for non-renewal of a contract, particularly when news of it comes as a surprise at the very end of the contractual period. Such cases demonstrate very clearly why regular feedback is essential. If there are performance issues, then the staff member should be made aware of them as soon as possible, with an opportunity to improve. This process can be as simple as establishing a monitoring timetable with specific tasks or further training to be undertaken. Documented evidence over time is required to establish grounds not to renew a contract based on underperformance.

Formal rebuttals can be used effectively when there is unresolved disagreement over the contents of the appraisal document. In this context, staff members must remain aware that if they disagree with the supervisor's appraisal, it is not enough simply to write some non-specific comments at the time of signing off on their appraisals: this is the only opportunity for a staff member to go on record with his/her account of the situation. In spite of the general streamlining of the rebuttal procedures in the Funds and Programmes, there is an indication that many staff members remain unaware that this is a right or, in some cases, that they do not know that the process exists. There is also confusion about whether or not to sign the performance appraisal when there is disagreement. In smaller offices, there is a concern that the panel – or whatever mechanism is used to handle rebuttals – may not be neutral. Indeed, sometimes the manager who has given the appraisal in question might also be a member of the rebuttal process.

Rebuttals can also be difficult to carry out when they come near the end of the contract: the manager may not respond in a timely fashion, which puts the staff member at a distinct disadvantage. It is apparent from such cases during the year that staff members have little awareness of what to do when there is serious disagreement on the performance appraisal and the contract is about to expire. By the time the assistance of the Ombudsman is sought, it may be too late to intervene.

What can the Organization do?

The Funds and Programmes should reinforce their efforts to strengthen the performance-evaluation process as a career-management tool. Supervisors must use it not only to motivate underperformers but also to recognize and increase greater professional achievement in the workplace.

If there are performance issues, then the staff member should be made aware of them as soon as possible, with an opportunity to improve.

Clear instructions and orientation on rebuttal procedures should be widely disseminated to staff. It is not enough to share this information at the end of the performance-appraisal cycle. Staff should familiarize themselves not only with the performance-appraisal mechanisms but also with the practices and steps involved when there are serious disagreements on performance appraisal.

The Executive Heads should hold supervisors accountable for completing the performance-evaluation process and should institute monitoring systems to ensure that performance-evaluation mechanisms are not being used as in instrument to harass staff.

What can the Ombudsman do?

Without the creation for proper procedures to deal with abusive managers, there is little that the Office of the Ombudsman can do to stop the practice of using performance management as a tool for harassment. The Office is a safe place for managers and staff alike to share confidentially experience of harassment and to obtain coaching on how to deal with abusive situations.

The Office has mediated in a number of cases where the conflict arose from differences between supervisees and supervisors over performance appraisal, providing both parties the opportunity to express their own comments and arguments in the presence of a neutral third person. In the course of discussion in most of these cases, new points and issues were discovered that the parties had not pre-

viously raised but which proved relevant in seeking a solution. As a result, agreement was reached through mediation and, in some cases, the comments and even scores of the performance appraisals were modified.

3. Supervisory effectiveness and performance

The Office has addressed a number of disputes arising from poor supervisory and management skills. Staff often request assistance on how to deal with managers who have poor supervisory skills or who are not able to convey proper leadership in the workplace. Some staff have complained that their performance has been unfairly criticized by new supervisors whereas they had always performed well in the past.

In such instances, the staff members do not accept that the supervisor is being fair in the assessment when there is clear evidence of previous good performance. This creates mistrust in the workplace, especially when new managers supervise long-serving staff members with years of experience in the same office. However, sudden negative performance assessments do not necessarily mean that the supervisor has poor managerial skills. In some instances, the Ombudsmen have discovered that the staff member had had poor performance for a long time prior to the new supervisor's assessment. This is not always apparent from the performance evaluation itself owing to vagueness and lack of honest feedback from the previous supervisor. The staff member has essentially been parked in that particular office because of a lack of will on the part of the supervisor and the organization as a whole to deal with the staff member in an honest, transparent way.

In addition, the Office has observed that in cases of poor performance, supervisors sometimes let staff contracts lapse with no further explanation being given to staff other than the fact that staff have no expectancy for renewal. Sometimes contracts lapse before a final performance evaluation has taken place. There may be no expectancy of renewal but, as noted above, it is good practice and makes business sense for management to communicate openly with staff, particularly in cases of poor performance. It is important to note in this context that the United Nations Dispute Tribunal has ruled in paragraph 28 of its judgement UNDT/2011/007 that, "there is an emerging jurisprudential thinking that when a contract is not renewed or terminated reasons must be given to the concerned staff member so that he or she is in a position to take any actions as he or she deems fit".

It is, therefore, essential for the staff member and the administration to be aware of well-documented evidence of bad performance. When contracts are not renewed on account of unsatisfactory performance, it is incumbent on the organization to follow due process.

What can the Organization do?

Dramatic changes in performance do not normally occur when a new supervisor assumes duty. When a difference is observed between former, documented good performance and present apparent performance, the new supervisor should make a special effort to understand why there is a discrepancy. It is useful to check with the former supervisor and to make sure that effective communication channels are in place between the supervisor and the supervisee. If the new supervisor has different expectations, they must be made clear to the supervisee.

The organization should always be concerned and investigate why a long-serving staff member with satisfactory performance has been downgraded, especially when there has been a change of supervisor or a reorganization of the office. There should be more emphasis on accountability not to give vague, dishonest feedback and to manage unsatisfactory performance effectively.

Performance evaluations should be completed in a timely manner and always before the end of a staff member's contract to ensure that the administrative process is fair and to allow time for a rebuttal if needed and to apply for new positions.

What can the Ombudsman do?

The Ombudsman can listen to all parties concerned and facilitate dialogue between the new supervisor and his or her supervisee.

The Office can also coach a staff member facing performance problems in ways to communicate clearly in a non-aggressive manner to help to resolve the conflict. In these situations, the Ombudsman sometimes has to remind staff that the assistance they receive from the Office may not yield the results that they want.

D. Career management

The link between career management and organizational efficiency is not a new concept. Optimal organizational performance is increasingly dependent on an efficiency-driven workforce that is professionally fulfilled. Thus, career management is of paramount importance to the individual staff member as well as to the organization. Managing careers has become even more critical in view of the general trend away from long-term appointments and the different, sometimes inconsistent, career-management policies across organizations. It is more usual to hire staff for shorter-term, specific assignments without the expectation of a career in the Funds and Programmes. There is an absence of effective career-management policies in the form of ongoing dialogue between the administration and staff members on their future in the organizational workforce, a lack of learning opportunities and little support in identifying alternative employment outside the organization. All this causes uncertainty and creates disgruntled, unhappy staff, leading to low morale, lack of motivation, reduced productivity and in some cases departure. Finally, the organizations will not be seen as employers of choice and will not attract talent.

Overall career management is affected by many important components of organizational policy and practice, including recruitment, vacancy management, staff rotation, time in post, tours of duty, succession planning, reorganization and change- management processes. Other elements that have an impact on career management include the quality of human resources and operations services, the one-time review process and its impact, restructuring and succession arrangements. Unless all these aspects of career management are handled in a comprehensive, accountable and transparent manner, guided by appropriate policies and procedures, there will be serious repercussions and threats to the viability of the organizations.

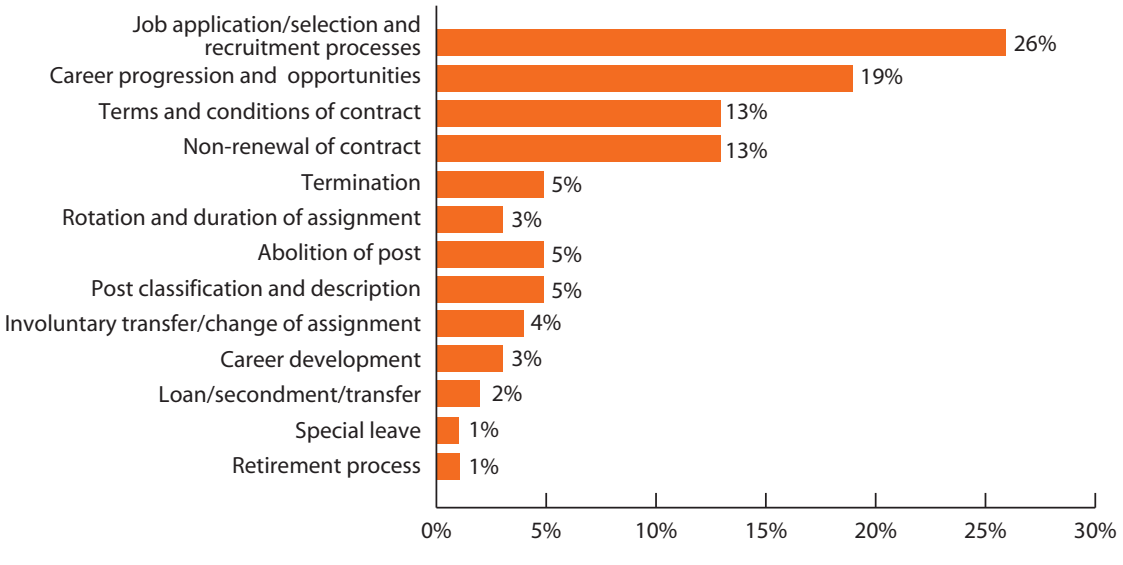
Optimal organizational performance is increasingly dependent on an efficiency-driven workforce that is professionally fulfilled.

During the reporting period, 26 per cent of cases brought to the attention of the Office concerned job and career-related issues. A breakdown of the issues within the job- and career-related category is provided in figure 6.

1. Recruitment

The Ombudsmen welcome the attempts that all organizations are making to ensure that recruitment for a position in the United Nations is a transparent, rigorous and equitable process. Nevertheless, it has come to the notice of the Office that there continue to be lapses in adhering to the high standards expected of the United Nations. In some cases, shortlisting,

Figure 6. Job- and career-related issues



or even longlisting, does not always screen out applicants who do not possess the educational qualifications, skills and competencies set out in the vacancy announcement while screening out candidates who do possess those qualities.

There is some variation across the organizations regarding the interview process. The Ombudsmen believe that an effective recruitment process should take into account a candidate's proven professional record, the recommendations of supervisors and other references, and performance during the interview. The weight given to each of these components seems to vary. An effective screening process will produce a roster of candidates for interview who meet the professional and technical requirements. The interview will enable panellists to recommend the candidate who performs best in that setting. In this scenario, the Ombudsmen understand the rationale behind a competency-based interview. However, it is difficult to understand why the interview sometimes carries so much weight. The Office has received complaints from staff members who have failed to secure a new position and have received feedback not only that they did not do well on the interview but also that the successful candidate was selected on the basis of performance in the interview. When there is a convergence of disturbing factors regarding shortlisting, the interview process and final-selection criteria, some staff members have understandably raised concerns about the ways in which recruitment is sometimes carried out.

In addition to the points above, the Ombudsmen frequently hear that a post has been earmarked for a preferred candidate before the recruitment process begins. It is not unusual for staff members to try to ascertain whether a vacancy is real in the sense that a transparent process will ensue. The Ombudsmen appreciate that a staff member with a proven record may be a very attractive candidate for a post; nevertheless, in the United Nations, recruitment must follow the prescribed route, thus ensuring a fair chance for all candidates to compete equally.

External candidates have also contacted the Office of the Ombudsman to register concerns and complaints about the recruitment process. While the services of the Office are, strictly speaking, offered only to staff members and former staff members, the Ombudsmen understand the frustration that some external candidates experience in not being able to access any further information after their candidacy has not been successful. Rather than give the impression that the United Nations is an impregnable fortress, the Ombudsmen have offered brief, constructive options to such candidates.

What can the Organization do?

The Funds and Programmes do revise their approaches to recruitment on a regular basis. However, it may be productive to share experience with a view towards harmonizing recruitment procedures further, especially in view of the system-wide adherence to competency-based interviews. The approaches to vacancy announcements (which are not always clear), shortlisting and longlisting, and the interview process, for example, require standardization of procedures. Thereafter, it is essential to follow the procedures in force to the letter otherwise staff – and external candidates – will lose faith.

In order to ensure that the recruitment process results in the hiring of a suitable and appropriate candidate, it is essential that interviews be conducted: organizations must insist that interviews are conducted for every vacancy. In addition, personality assessments should be used more systematically by human resource managers to obtain a complete profile of the candidate. This would allow for a comprehensive assessment of the candidate.

The organizations should provide constructive feedback on the interview process for every candidate, successful or unsuccessful who requests it.

It has been the practice in some organizations to offer staff members coaching for competency-based interviews. While acknowledging the value of information disseminated on United Nations competencies, the Ombudsmen view this as somewhat problematic: are there special techniques that can be taught for an interview that have no professional relevance beyond the interview? What happens if some staff members have benefited from training and some have not? Does this create an unfair advantage for those who have? How can the organization guarantee equality of opportunity? Have the members of the interview panel received adequate training for such an important task? How are the members selected and should the supervisor be on the interview panel? (Organizations have wavered on this, with some requiring the presence of the supervisor and others categorically not allowing it.) The Ombudsmen raise these questions from staff members in the hope that the organizations will take them into consideration in the design and application of interviews.

What can the Ombudsman do?

The Ombudsman has been able to assist in seeking clarification regarding the recruitment process, including requests for feedback from unsuccessful candidates. The latter are sometimes reluctant to approach human resource specialists and the Ombudsman is able to dispel any fear that requests for information may have negative effects. In some instances, staff are able to move ahead in the job search after articulating their concerns to the Ombudsman, who may be able to provide options that have not occurred to the staff member. The Ombudsman recommends open dialogue with a representative of the human resource units whenever this is possible.

Experience has shown that the Ombudsman can provide a platform to reflect with the visitor on opportunities for career-path changes opportunities both within the organization and outside.

2. Staff rotation and time-in-post requirements

The Office of the Ombudsman has received a number of grievances pertaining to post rotation and time-in-post requirements. Some of the Funds and Programmes have a rotation policy that sets out the framework of periodic transfers and reassignment of international staff. These organizations have a well-designed rotation exercise. However, the Ombudsmen have observed a piecemeal approach to the implementation of the rotation exercise. For example, it seems that organizations do not have alternatives for staff who are unsuccessful in obtaining another position during the rotation exercise. The rotation system costs money and takes time. Very often, the country offices participating in the rotation exercise invest money to bring top candidates for face-to-face interviews by paying all travel costs, investing huge amounts of time on the selection process and identifying and selecting the right candidate. They later discover that everything has to be cancelled because the current incumbent of the post, who is also participating in the rotation exercise, could not identify a suitable post available for that particular rotation and therefore the post cannot be vacated. The organization has not been proactive in helping the current incumbent, who has reached the maximum time in post, to expolore all options for a career move.

The lack of clear, open communication about tours of duty to newly recruited staff at the time of their initial recruitment has caused conflict, especially when staff want to apply for other positions or move to another duty station after two-to-three years of service. The organization refuses to consider them for other position, citing the rule of required time in post or tour of duty at the location. There is a lack of clarity and information given on the implementation of time-in-post requirements in some organizations. Staff are put in a situation where they wish that they had been unequivocally informed of the requirements to move duty stations prior to accepting their positions and not after they have accepted the new post.

In such situations, it is important to recall a well-established principle of equity – it is unfair to apportion equal treatment to people whose situations are not equal. The application of policy should take cognizance of varied situational contexts. For example, the decision to uniformly extend the time in post for all duty stations ignores the fundamental reason why there are different time-in-post requirements for different categories of duty stations. Hardship levels vary depending on the duty station. Applying the same rule uniformly across the board increases time spent in a hardship duty station disproportionately. This results in a time-in-post requirement for a D/E duty station (most difficult) for a period that exceeds even the extended time in post for an A-C station (least difficult). In short, an extra year in a hardship duty station cannot be equated to an extra year in a less hardship duty station.

There is a need for proactive career management.

The rationale for time-in-post requirements is to ensure mutual benefit to both the staff and the organization. It has been shown that diminishing returns begin after two years in D/E duty stations. The importance of this factor seems to have been undervalued in favour of financial considerations in the new arrangements. The drive to reduce costs appears to have overridden the importance of staff career development and retention.

What can the Organization do?

There is a need for proactive career management. The Funds and Programmes should have a better strategy of rotation that addresses not only the successful candidates but also those who are not successful in being placed. Candidates should be made aware in the early stages of the rotation exercise of the options that are available to them in case they are unsuccessful at obtaining a position.

The Funds and Programmes should inform and indicate in the letter of offer information about the time-in-post and tour-of-duty requirements of the country office. In addition, the organizations should include information in the vacancy announcement on the position's location and provide a copy of the policy on staff rotation and what it entails for the candidate so that the selected candidate can have the full information and consider the offer prior to accepting the post.

More generally, it is important that the Funds and Programmes place a high priority on setting up effective career management units, structures and mechanisms.

What can the Ombudsman do?

Although the Ombudsman cannot intervene once a final recruitment decision has been taken, the Office is available to explore options with displaced staff that have been unsuccessful in obtaining a position. The Office may also assist staff members in obtaining feedback about their candidature and prospects.

An important aspect of the coaching role of the Ombudsman in this area is to help staff members to explore the whole range of career options.

3. Restructuring and change-management practices

Restructuring and change-management practices require thoughtful planning, sensitive implementation and an engaged leadership with the involvement of all staff that are affected by the proposed change. The Office of the Ombudsman has noticed that during periods of change, some leaders have a tendency to become inaccessible, even disengage emotionally, which can create uncertainty, stress and mistrust in the workplace. Managers are "turtling", acting like turtles in a defensive mood. Their hesitance slows them down and they disengage emotionally. As a result, the credibility of the change-management process and the reputa-tion of the organization as a whole are adversely affected with staff ultimately becoming disengaged, demotivated and unproductive. In the current economic crisis and competitive work environment, it is important for the Funds and Programmes to quickly address the early warning signs of "turtling" within their leaders, exemplified by unproductive behaviour such as: (a) tendency to micromanage the team; (b) using inflexible top-down communication; (c) not dealing with conflict or refusing to deliver bad news and give direct feedback; and (d) conveniently not hearing or dismissing constructive feedback.

Some leaders have a tendency to become inaccessible, even disengage emotionally, which can create uncertainty, stress and mistrust in the workplace.

Due diligence should be observed by the administration in order to ensure that staff are properly informed of the various steps involved in the change-management process. In addition, options available to staff must be clearly communicated before the process begins. The Office of the Ombudsman has worked on cases from staff members whose posts have either been abolished or frozen owing to budgetary constraints. Staff indicate that they were not informed in advance of the type of separation arrangements that are available to them after unsuccessfully participating in a restructuring exercise. Furthermore, some organizations have delayed publishing revised guidelines and procedures on restructuring, thus increasing the level of uncertainty for staff members.

What can the Organization do?

Senior management must inform staff who will be affected by organizational change of the reason for the change in order to build trust, ownership and cooperation in the process. Managers' confidence in their own leadership often motivates positive actions and, conversely, lack of confidence results in a reluctance to consult and engage staff in the planning and implementation of change-management processes. Having a conversation where a staff member feels heard may help to prevent escalation of conflict and will render it less likely that staff feel that they were treated unfairly.

Organizations should equip staff with the knowledge that they require to prepare themselves for change. This will predispose staff to accepting change rather than rejecting it. Management should arrange for staff whose employment has been adversely affected by restructuring and change to meet in person with their direct supervisors and human resource officers at least three months prior to the end of their contract to discuss the separation process.

What can the Ombudsman do?

The Office of the Ombudsman can draw on its experience in assisting organizations to cope with change and share best practices on how to overcome fear and resistance to change.

The Office can raise awareness about people management in periods of change and restructuring by assisting organizations to design training programmes and workshops that emphasize leadership skills and appropriate behaviour in the workplace. The Office provides a confidential, neutral space for leaders and managers to explore avenues on how they can better their management styles and practices.

4. One-time review process

The Office of the Ombudsman has addressed a number of issues relating to the one-time review process. This process, mandated by the General Assembly, allows staff who have fulfilled certain specified criteria to qualify for a continuing appointment. All the Funds and Programmes have embarked on reviewing eligible candidates and have kept all staff informed as to the progress of the review. In general, the eligibility of staff members for consideration for permanent contracts was conducted in a systematic and fair manner; however, the Ombudsmen have ascertained that in some cases, feedback given to eligible staff who were not awarded a continuing appointment was insufficient. These staff members felt left out and discriminated against. Although communication was sent indicating that they had been unsuccessful, sometimes after much time had elapsed from the initial request, reasons behind the decision not to award them continuing appointment were not shared.

The Office has been involved in cases where a failure to rectify past administrative discrepancies has affected the eligibility of some staff members for permanent appointments. This primarily concerns staff whose contracts are administered by one organization but who work and perform core functions in another. In most cases, permanent appointments were not awarded even though the staff members otherwise met all the criteria for the award of a permanent appointment. These staff members therefore have the impression that they have not been equitably treated by the organization.

What can the Organization do?

All organizations must ensure that staff who have not been awarded permanent appointments but appear to be eligible are given feedback on why they have been denied a permanent appointment. In addition, efforts should be made to communicate the results of the one-time review process to all eligible staff at the same time. This would avoid perceptions of discrimination or unfairness where the majority of eligible staff in a country office receive the results of their request and some wait for longer periods, a situation that fuels gossip and conjecture.

Feedback given to eligible staff who were not awarded a continuing appointment was insufficient.

What can the Ombudsman do?

The Ombudsmen have brought these concerns to the attention of management and have facilitated dialogue between staff and management on this issue with the objective of shedding light on what can seem a highly individualized process.

5. Occupational health

The Office of the Ombudsman has observed high levels of stress, depression and sick leave among the Funds and Programmes workforce resulting from abuse of power, harassment (including bullying), lack of respect and inappropriate behaviour in the workplace.

Organizations need to develop and increase their participation in wellbeing programmes, which can only bring a return on their investment. Getting managers to understand the correlation between healthier employees and corporate gain would create a favourable climate for such initiatives. The comprehensive testing that is a part of efficient occupational-healthcare practice ensures that employees have the physical and mental capacity required to perform their duties successfully.

The severity of stress has increased to such an extent that some employees who have been subjected to abusive behaviour for long periods have had thoughts of suicide and violence, causing them huge emotional problems. The recent Joint Inspection Unit report on the management of sick leave in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2012/2) concludes that "maintaining a healthy working

environment is a sine qua non for reducing absenteeism (sick leave)".

What can the Organization do?

It is important for the organization to provide counselling and coaching services for staff. This would help to promote a healthier work environment and improve the quality of relations among staff.

Consistent monitoring of sick-leave requests and active promotion of the use of flexible working arrangements are some of the ways that the organization can ensure a healthier workplace. Human resource departments should strengthen their collaboration with the Medical Services in order to allow for better monitoring of health or stress levels in the workplace. For example, the Funds and Programmes are required to ensure that staff comply with the requirement of a mandatory medical check-up every two years. Compliance with this mandatory requirement not only benefits staff but also allows the organization to have an overall view of the state of occupational health in the workplace and take preventive action against possible harmful practices. Furthermore, in its decision on healthcare and its management in the United Nations system (CEB/2009/HLCM/32), the Chief Executives Board adopted an occupational safety and health policy that supports a pro-active approach in developing policies and practices in this regard.

Organizations need to develop and increase their participation in wellbeing programmes, which can only bring a return on their investment.

What can the Ombudsman do?

The Ombudsman can offer a safe, confidential space for staff to air their grievances; nevertheless, in matters that concern high levels of stress and depression, the Ombudsman will recommend that staff seek professional attention.

6. Quality of human resource operations and services

The role of the human resource manager is pivotal to strong leadership and fostering equitable practices within an organization. Management should put a high priority on the efficient and effective management of human resources. In its previous reports, the Office of the Ombudsman has consistently highlighted the need for a strong, professional human resource workforce. Nevertheless, during the reporting period the Office has been approached by staff dealing with less-than-satisfactory service from the staff of human resource offices, particularly regarding the interpretation or application of rules and regulations. In most cases, staff members have complained of an inflexible approach that does not obtain results, inhibits workflow and causes conflict in the workplace. The Office has received grievances about the lack of coherence and knowledge, especially pertaining to issues such as break-in-service requirements, rental subsidies, disability and application of the one-time review process.

Other human resource factors that came to the notice of the Office concern the lack of adequate succession planning. Audit experts deem loss of institutional memory as the greatest internal threat to an organization since it causes more damage to operations than any other potential risk. For example, in some organizations, positions in the human resource departments, including those at the senior level, remain vacant for a long time. The result is that the services provided by those departments are slow or unresponsive and have a negative impact on operations.

Accountability frameworks are sometimes unclear, especially in situations where staff have their contracts administered by one entity but are employed by another entity. In these situations, human resource departments are responsible for administering the staff member's contracts and entitlements but they cannot make managerial decisions. When there is dual responsibility for the management of employment, authoritative action may be delayed, with the staff member directed back and forth between the human resource department and the employing agency before a decision is reached. In highly stressful situations such as medical evacuation or re-structuring, for example, such behaviour can have drastic consequences. A breakdown of the issues within the services and administration category as provided in figure 7 demonstrate that interpretation and application of the rules by service providers such as human resources is a major factor causing conflict in the workplace.

What can the Organization do?

When there are disputes about the disbursement of entitlements and management of benefits, it is important that human resource professionals convey to staff a comprehensive understanding of the rules and policies. This must be done not only through a proper citing of the rules but also through sharing the reason behind why the rule does or does not apply. Mere repetition of the rule or citation of the policy is not enough.

Timely, deliberate, implementation of adequate, effective succession arrangements should be a top management and human resources priority. In this context, the identification, development and retention of talent is of extreme importance.

Where staff members are employed by one agency but administered by another, clear roles and responsibilities on the management of staff employment need to be delineated and circulated to staff at the beginning of their assignment. Staff need to know who will be accountable for decision-making in the administration of their benefits and entitlements.

What can the Ombudsman do?

In situations where there is a communication breakdown, especially with regard to resolving disputes and misunderstanding concerning employment, the Office of the Ombudsman supports efforts to obtain clarity through channelling staff within the system and facilitating dialogue between parties. In their periodic meetings with the Executives Heads, the Ombudsmen highlight systemic changes that need to take place in order to professionalize the type of services that are offered by human resource departments

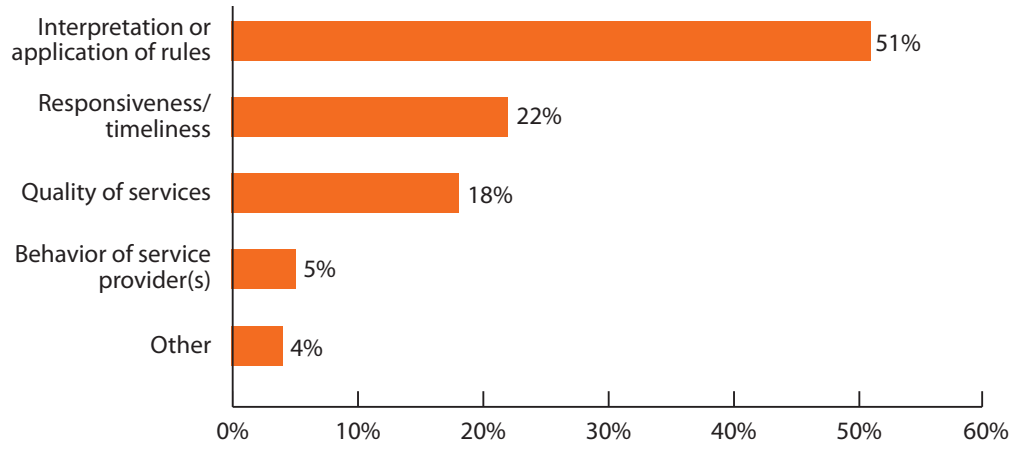
7. Management of benefits and entitlements

The Funds and Programmes offer a number of benefits and entitlements to staff. Staff often need assistance in navigating the system of entitlements and benefits and look to human resource professionals for guidance and support. In most cases, staff members receive this assistance and are able to plan accordingly. However, the Ombudsmen have received cases where staff lodge claims of incompetence and lack of responsiveness from human resource professionals, particularly to do with compensation and benefits claims in areas such as separation entitlements, management of entitlements by various entities, rental subsidies and entitlements for retirees.

Audit experts deem loss of institutional memory as the greatest internal threat to an organization since it causes more damage to operations than any other potential risk.

Many staff facing separation have contacted the Office requesting a breakdown of what their benefits and entitlements will be, which indicates an organizational need to clarify what is due when a staff member separates from the organization, especially since staff members separate in a variety of

Figure 7. Services and/or Administration



ways. For example, a number of staff members have contacted the Office requesting more information on the implications of going on disability. When disability is an option for separation, it is important that staff members receive precise information from the relevant human resource focal point on how it will affect their particular situation. For this kind of information, staff members are often informed by human resources that they should go to the Pension Fund. However helpful the information the Pension Fund provides may be, it does not give a staff member the fuller picture of how disability will affect other benefits such as health and separation entitlements. This is the kind of information that can be provided only by human resources.

The Office has noticed what seems to be a lack of coordination among various entities for the management of staff benefits and entitlements. There needs to be a coordinated approach among different entities for sharing information about staff entitlements. For example, many visitors have come to the Office because of a dearth of communication regarding health insurance and medical entitlements benefits. These entitlements are managed by various focal points, namely human resources, medical services and sometimes the health insurance company. It is sometimes confusing for staff to understand the specific mandate of each, especially in a crisis. There needs to be managed, coordinated communication and approaches for managing entitlements in such situations.

Some visitors have complained about being misinformed about rental subsidies. While information is available on the website that enables staff to calculate the amount of their subsidy, there is no information indicating that there is a cap on the total subsidy a staff member can receive for rent.

As organizations become more creative at finding ways to cut costs using different mechanisms such as mergers and delivering as one, they should find provisions to ensure that all entitlements are honoured, including those of retired staff. The Ombudsman has observed that the concerns of retired staff members, such as after-service health insurance (ASHI), are often overlooked with the result that they may no longer benefit from adequate medical coverage.

What can the Organization do?

In order to reduce the potential of conflict, human resource offices should indicate to staff all options that are available on separation.

The organization should have an integrated approach for managing staff entitlements, especially if it requires information from other relevant entities such as the Medical Services or the Pension Fund.

Organizations should include in their orientation or induction package at country-office level the maximum subsidy payable per category and level of staff for renting a house. This would avoid misunderstanding and difficulties where, because of lack of clear and accurate information at an early stage, new staff members are faced with an obligation to pay more than they had in all good faith budgeted for.

When organizations undergo structural change, they should define clear accountabilities for the management of entitlements affecting both active staff and those who have retired from the organization. These elements should be incorporated into the business strategy to mitigate conflict and litigation.

What can the Ombudsman do?

The Office of the Ombudsman may assist staff in obtaining information from human resources and channelling the staff member within the system.

The Office can also facilitate dialogue on issues that are causing misunderstanding or conflict in the disbursement and or management of benefits and entitlements.

E. United Nations Volunteers

The year 2011 marked the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Volunteer. During the year, the Ombudsmen were privileged to visit UNV headquarters in Bonn. The Ombudsmen were encouraged to learn of the many reform initiatives planned to improve the conditions of service of volunteers.

Throughout the years, the Office of the Ombudsman has noticed that there is a tendency to treat United Nations volunteers as second class citizens and to draw on volunteers as cheap labour. This has a negative effect in the workplace resulting in double standards in the treatment of volunteers.

United Nations volunteers contribute to achieving the goals and objectives of programmes and to building local capacity in their country of assignment. Most volunteers join UNV because of a strong allegiance to the spirit of voluntarism. Sometimes this element is questioned by the organization they serve, especially if some people make the transition from volunteer to staff. This has

resulted in stringent checks and balances being introduced, particularly in peacekeeping operations.

There are some challenges in ensuring that volunteers do not serve too long in duty stations, especially in hardship duty stations.

What can the Organization do?

In order to ensure that due process is observed, the Office of the Ombudsman would like to encourage UNV to harmonize the regulatory framework for recruitment. Lack of clarity due to various practices and rules has led to confusion and frustration for some volunteers. It would be helpful to accelerate the revision of the conditions of service for United Nations volunteers.

What can the Ombudsman do?

Although United Nations volunteers do not possess staff contracts, the services of the Office of the Ombudsman are available to them to address workplace concerns.

F. Global staff surveys

The Global Staff Survey (GSS) is an excellent source of information on organizational climate and trends. The Ombudsman recognizes the efforts organizations make to obtain feedback from staff, and some organizations seem to have an effective system to follow up on the issues raised in the survey. Nevertheless, the Office of the Ombudsman observes that in some instances GSS results are not well managed and that there is a lack of follow-up. The results are not used to address the issues that are generated in the survey and become very often repetitive. This situation generates a lack of trust from staff and undermines the organization's credibility. Furthermore, the Ombudsman continues to receive information that in some offices there is coercion to record only positive remarks and grades in the GSS. Experience has shown that this form of intimidation is always an attempt to conceal poor management practices.

What can the Organization do?

The organization is accountable for bad people management. Concrete action should be taken as a result of the survey. Damaging results should be addressed.

The Funds and Programmes should build into their induction programmes a culture of managing employees with a human face.

It is important to ensure that the surveys are conducted at regular intervals. Any postponement of a survey can easily undermine its effectiveness.

What can the Ombudsman do?

The Office of the Ombudsman can be used as a sounding board to alert the organization and address the concerns that are being raised about the use of the feedback received in the GSS. They should address those issues in view of maintaining a harmonious work environment where staff can feel safe from bullying and any form of workplace harassment.

Chapter III

Looking ahead

The cost of conflict

The Office will strengthen its efforts to illustrate the link between enhanced workforce engagement and well-being on the one hand and organizational financial performance and productivity on the other. This effort will include the use of existing risk-management frameworks as vehicles to generate the data needed for a more informed and comprehensive assessment of the impact of organizational conflict.

In an environment of continued fiscal challenges, the Office of the Ombudsman will continue to review how to deliver ombudsman services in a more cost-efficient way. In this context, the Office will expand its use of web-based outreach and learning activities to limit travel costs while acknowledging the continued need for face-to-face interventions.

Assessing the services of the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes

The Office will develop better mechanisms to measure the quality and efficiency of its services. The absence of terms of reference for UNOMS and thus the absence of benchmarks for performance measurement have delayed plans to conduct an external and independent review of the work of the Office. In 2011, the Office tested feedback forms as one tool to measure the efficiency of its services. It is envisaged that in consultation with the Funds and Programmes covered by the Office, a strategy will be developed to allow for both a review of the work of the Office and an assessment of the status of conflict management in the organizations covered.

Building the capacity to manage workplace conflict building will continue to be a strategic focus of the Office.

Capacity-building for conflict management

Building the capacity to manage workplace conflict will continue to be a strategic focus of the Office. However, the Office is well aware of its limited capacity and the roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders, including staff associations, supervisors, human resources staff and peer-support mechanisms. Against this backdrop, the Ombudsmen have revisited the potential of the Respectful Workplace Advisor (RWA) programme. This programme targets and trains peer-nominated staff members to be responsible for monitoring the workplace for threats to, and opportunities for ensuring, a respectful work environment free from unethical behaviour, disrespect for diversity, and abusive authority. The Office will review its capacity-building programme, including a strategy to introduce RWA programmes in the Funds and Programmes. The development of a strategy will be done in close consultation with stakeholders and will clearly delineate roles and responsibilities to avoid duplication of tasks.

Building on recommendations of the Ombudsmen, some Funds and Programmes have started to strengthen periodic consultation among the various stakeholders involved in conflict management. The Office will focus on building such consultation and coordination mechanisms in all Funds and Programmes covered by the Office as an integral tool in building comprehensive conflict-management systems.

Mediation in the workplace

The Office of the Ombudsman is encouraged by the interest in the use of mediation as a tool to resolve disputes. While there is much higher potential for its use, the mediations conducted by the Office in 2011 have increased senior-management understanding and support for mediation as a cost- and time-efficient tool for conflict resolution. The Office will build on this support and strengthen its promotion of the use of mediation.

Annex 1

Recommendations

Managing with a human face

1 From time to time the Executive Heads should messages not only of encouragement for achievements but also gentle reminders that with the privilege of serving the United Nations comes the responsibility to adhere to the code of conduct for the international civil service. This would provide a different, proactive aspect from that of the periodic reports on disciplinary action taken by the organization. Such reminders, covering different aspects – mutual respect in the workplace, equitable treatment, and ethical behaviour – would build on the sense of vocation that motivates the overwhelming majority of staff members.

2. The organization could also arrange for town-hall meetings, mandatory leadership and management training, workshops, retreats, brown-bag lunches to cover one aspect at a time of the successes of managing with a human face while analysing the obstacles that prevent it.

3. The Executive Heads could send a clear signal to abrasive managers that their behaviour must change and require that the administration make more pro-active use of the Global Staff Survey to address inappropriate managerial behaviour.

4. On the recommendation of the Ombudsmen, the administration could arrange for a management review that would bring to light the complaints received by the Office of the Ombudsman. It is important to note here that when an ombudsman signals, from confidential information, that a serious situation is pervading an office, s/he always does so in a way that will protect the identity of those who have been courageous enough to speak out.

Misconduct and lack of accountability

5. Addressing misconduct such as bullying relies heavily on strong leadership. When the Funds and Programmes recruit leaders, they should emphasize not only the need for technical abilities but should also require evidence of understanding, tolerance and integrity in the workplace.

6. The organizations should act promptly when there are valid reasons to suspect that harassment and abuse of authority, including bullying, are taking place in an office even when formal complaints have not been made. In this context, the organizations should consider bullying as a form of harassment requiring specific measures of protection.

7. The organizations should put in place programmes that specifically address misconduct in the workplace with special emphasis on the root causes of bullying. Leaders can support such programmes through mentorship opportunities and by demonstrating behaviour that inspire other colleagues.

8. The organizations should put systems in place for the active, periodic monitoring of sick-leave data, which will allow them to identify potentially risky situations arising from inappropriate managerial behaviour. They should then follow up on their findings with visits to offices with high absenteeism due to sick leave in order to ascertain whether the work environment is affected by managerial misconduct.

Performance appraisal mechanisms and concerns

9. Organizations should increase the use of internet-based tools to obtain continuous feedback from staff on performance-appraisal processes and mechanisms.

   Any new system should focus on simplification and it is critical that new systems not be introduced too often. It is equally critical that all staff understand the new system. A trial period and thorough orientation are absolutely necessary.

10. The Funds and Programmes should reinforce their efforts to strengthen the performance-evaluation process as a career-management tool. Supervisors must use it not only to motivate underperformers but also to recognize and increase greater professional achievement in the workplace.

11. Clear instructions and orientation on rebuttal procedures should be widely disseminated to staff. It is not enough to share this information at the end of the performance-appraisal cycle. Staff should familiarize themselves not only with the performance-appraisal mechanisms but also with the practices and steps involved when there are serious disagreements on performance appraisal.

12. The Executive Heads should hold supervisors accountable for completing the performance-evaluation process and should institute monitoring systems to ensure that performance-evaluation mechanisms are not being used as in instrument to harass staff.

Supervisory effectiveness and performance

13. When a difference is observed between former, documented good performance and present apparent performance, the new supervisor should make a special effort to understand why there is a discrepancy. It is useful to check with the former supervisor and to make sure that effective communication channels are in place between the supervisor and the supervisee. If the new supervisor has different expectations, they must be made clear to the supervisee.

14. The organization should always be concerned and investigate why a long-serving staff member with satisfactory performance has been downgraded, especially when there has been a change of supervisor or a reorganization of the office. There should be more emphasis on accountability not to give vague, dishonest feedback and to manage unsatisfactory performance effectively.

15. Performance evaluations should be completed in a timely manner and always before the end of a staff member's contract to ensure that the administrative process is fair and to allow time for a rebuttal if needed and to apply for new positions.

Recruitment

16. The Funds and Programmes do revise their approaches to recruitment on a regular basis. However, it may be productive to share experience with a view towards harmonizing recruitment procedures further, especially in view of the system-wide adherence to competency-based interviews. The approaches to vacancy announcements (which are not always clear), shortlisting and longlisting, and the interview process, for example, require standardization of procedures. Thereafter, it is essential to follow the procedures in force to the letter otherwise staff – and external candidates – will lose faith.

17. Organizations must insist that interviews are conducted for every vacancy. In addition, personality assessments should be used more systematically by human resource managers to obtain a complete profile of the candidate. This would allow for a comprehensive assessment of the candidate.

18. The organizations should provide constructive feedback on the interview process for every candidate, successful or unsuccessful who requests it.

19. It has been the practice in some organizations to offer staff members coaching for competency-based interviews. While acknowledging the value of information disseminated on United Nations competencies, the Ombudsmen view this as somewhat problematic: are there special

techniques that can be taught for an interview that have no professional relevance beyond the interview? What happens if some staff members have benefited from training and some have not? Does this create an unfair advantage for those who have? How can the organization guarantee equality of opportunity? Have the members of the interview panel received adequate training for such an important task? How are the members selected and should the supervisor be on the interview panel? (Organizations have wavered on this, with some requiring the presence of the supervisor and others categorically not allowing it.) The Ombudsmen raise these questions from staff members in the hope that the organizations will take them into consideration in the design and application of interviews.

Staff rotation and time-in-post requirements

20. Candidates should be made aware in the early stages of the rotation exercise of the options that are available to them in case they are unsuccessful at obtaining a position.

21. The Funds and Programmes should inform and indicate in the letter of offer information about the time-in-post and tour-of-duty requirements of the country office. In addition, the organizations should include information in the vacancy announcement on the position's location and provide a copy of the policy on staff rotation and what it entails for the candidate so that the selected candidate can have the full information and consider the offer prior to accepting the post.

    More generally, it is important that the Funds and Programmes place a high priority on setting up effective career management units, structures and mechanisms.

Restructuring and change-management practices

22. Senior management must inform staff who will be affected by organizational change of the reason for the change in order to build trust, ownership and cooperation in the process.. Having a conversation where a staff member feels heard may help to prevent escalation of conflict and will render it less likely that staff feel that they were treated unfairly.

23. Organizations should equip staff with the knowledge that they require to prepare themselves for change. This will predispose staff to accepting change rather than rejecting it. Management should arrange for staff whose employment has been adversely affected by restructuring and change to meet in person with their direct supervisors and human resource officers at least three months prior to end of their contract to discuss the separation process.

One time review process

24. All organizations must ensure that staff who have not been awarded permanent appointments but appear to be eligible are given feedback on why they have been denied a permanent appointment. In addition, efforts should be made to communicate the results of the one-time review process to all eligible staff at the same time. This would avoid perceptions of discrimination or unfairness where the majority of eligible staff in a country office receive the results of their request and some wait for longer periods, a situation that fuels gossip and conjecture.

Occupational health

25. It is important for the organization to provide counselling and coaching services for staff. This would help to promote a healthier work environment and improve the quality of relations among staff.

26. Consistent monitoring of sick-leave requests and active promotion of the use of flexible working arrangements are some of the ways that the organization can ensure a healthier workplace. Human resource departments should strengthen their collaboration with the Medical Services in order to allow for better monitoring of health or stress levels in the workplace. For example, the Funds and Programmes are required to ensure that staff comply with the requirement of a mandatory medical check-up every two years.

Quality of human resource operations and services

27. When there are disputes about the disbursement of entitlements and management of benefits, it is important that human resource

professionals convey to staff a comprehensive understanding of the rules and policies. This must be done not only through a proper citing of the rules but also through sharing the reason behind why the rule does or does not apply. Mere repetition of the rule or citation of the policy is not enough.

28. Timely, deliberate, implementation of adequate, effective succession arrangements should be a top management and human resources priority. In this context, the identification, development and retention of talent is of extreme importance.

29. Where staff members are employed by one agency but administered by another, clear roles and responsibilities on the management of staff employment need to be delineated and circulated to staff at the beginning of their assignment. Staff need to know who will be accountable for decision-making in the administration of their benefits and entitlements.

Management of benefits and entitlements

30. The organization should have an integrated approach for managing staff entitlements, especially if it requires information from other relevant entities such as the Medical Services or the Pension Fund. In addition, in order to reduce the potential of conflict, human resource offices should indicate to staff all options that are available on separation.

31. Organizations should include in their orientation or induction package at country office level the maximum subsidy payable per category and level of staff for renting a house. This would avoid misunderstanding and difficulties where, because of lack of clear and accurate information at an early stage, new staff members are faced with an obligation to pay more than they had in all good faith budgeted for.

32. When organizations undergo structural change, they should define clear accountabilities for the management of entitlements affecting both active staff and those who have retired from the organization. These elements should be incorporated into the business strategy to mitigate conflict and litigation.

United Nations Volunteers

33. In order to ensure that due process is observed, the Office of the Ombudsman would like to encourage UNV to harmonize the regulatory framework for recruitment. Lack of clarity due to various practices and rules has led to confusion and frustration for some volunteers. It would be helpful to accelerate the revision of the conditions of service for United Nations volunteers.

Global staff surveys

34. The organization is accountable for bad people management. Concrete action should be taken as a result of the survey. Damaging results should be addressed. The Funds and Programmes should build into their induction programmes a culture of managing employees with a human face.

    It is important to ensure that the surveys are conducted at regular intervals. Any postponement of a survey can easily undermine its effectiveness.

Annex 2

Voices

"Thank you very much for talking with me today, and a few weeks ago, about questions I had regarding a problematic RCA. I am grateful for the time you took to clarify general RCA issues, for the serious consideration you gave the matter I raised, for understanding a complicated situation quickly, and for your counsel. I thank you, too, for giving me the kind of advice that would not lead to a confrontational spiral regarding the issue."

"On behalf of my colleagues, please accept our sincere thanks and appreciation for the great job and result that have been achieved in securing the rights of our colleagues. This case was pending for several years in spite of the repeated efforts to solve it, it remained pending, until you put the marvelous touches to solve it and take the corrective action to return back the rights. I am so proud of your efforts in dealing with the cases that were assigned to you during our hard time, the continuous and effective support that you have rendered to us, which included your visit and constant follow-ups."

"Also, my big thanks for my colleagues at the Ombuds Office who were always by my side during the last four months."

"I wanted to write to thank you for the exemplary assistance that I received resolving this issue successfully. Your colleague was a pleasure to deal with – very quick to focus in on the key problems, contact the relevant parties and find an effective and equitable solution. Despite the circumstances, it was one of the most uplifting and professional interactions I had with the UN administration during my time with the organization."

"It seems that the road is clear and that my life can go on. I thank you so much for all your support and patience with me. I will continue to improve on my competencies, communication and teamwork."

"Thank you so much for all your help again, you are an amazing person and we are lucky to have you in this position as without you I believe that I wouldn't have made it. This experience was new to me and came as a surprise."

"Thank you so much for your kind and sound words, I will take them to heart."

"I am writing this e-mail to express my gratitude for your support and the discussion that we just had regarding the required advice from my side. I sincerely appreciate your taking the time to speak to me and analyse the situation and I find your advice sincere and works for my benefit, and I will blindly follow. Again, I am grateful for such sound advice and I am happy that I have chosen to request advice from your office."

"Thank you for all of your time spent meeting with me and advising me during that stressful time. And thank you for any effort you made in relaying my message to the leaders. I will always appreciate your candour and kindness."

"Thank you very much for your patience and for your interest in helping me. I also appreciate your encouraging words, that I am sure will be very helpful once I pass this emotional moment."

"L'ensemble du staff, par ma voix, remercie le Bureau de l'Ombudsman à New York. Merci beaucoup! Nous serions heureux de recevoir votre équipe."

"Muchas gracias por su muestra de profesionalismo, y haberse tomado el tiempo de escucharme."

Annex 3

Issue Definitions

1. Compensation and Benefits	Salary, pension, leave, health insurance, various entitlements
2. Evaluative Relationships	Issues between colleagues with supervisory relationships
3. Peer and Colleague Relationships	Issues between colleagues with NO supervisory relationships
4. Job and Career Progression	Issues impacting job conditions or the career progression of the visitor: recruitment, contract, job description/classification, training, promotion, transfer and rotation, separation, abolition of post and retirement processes.
5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance	Harassment, discrimination, retaliation, gender and geographic balance; investigative/disciplinary processes, waste, fraud and abuse of funds
6. Safety, Health, Wellbeing, Stress and Work/Life	Working conditions; general wellbeing and stress; accommodation for disability or health conditions; issues with health, safety and security
7. Services/Administration	Responsiveness, timeliness and nature of response/services from sections providing services to staff (HR, pension fund, tax unit, etc…)
8. Organizational, Leadership and Management	Organizational climate, morale, culture, communication; change management, issues with leadership in the organization and management styles
9. Values, Ethics and Standards	Issues pertaining to United Nations Core values

1. Compensation and Benefits

1a. **Compensation:** Rate of pay, salary amount, job salary category

1b. **Payroll Administration**

1c. **Pension**

1d. **Leave:** Annual; sick; maternity; excluding special leaves, sabbaticals, suspension for disciplinary reasons

1e. **Health Insurance and Medical Entitlements** (including medevac; DSA; companion ticket, etc.)

1f. **Dependent Benefits**

1g. **Taxes**

1h. **Recruitment Entitlements** (relocation grant; shipment; etc.)

1i. **Separation Entitlements** (repatriation grant; shipping; sep. indemnities, etc.)

1j. **Travel Entitlements** (ticket, DSA, hotel, excluding medical travel)

1k. **Special Operations/Hazard Entitlements**

1l. **Other**

2. Evaluative Relationships

(Excluding harassment, discrimination and retaliation)

2a. **Interpersonal Differences:** Interpersonal conflict involving differences in personalities/ Suspicions of hidden motives/mistrust/ different work styles

2b. **Respect/Treatment:** Demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, dismissive or rude behavior, unfair or preferential treatment.

2c. **Reputation:** Potential impact of rumors or gossip about professional or personal matters

2d. **Communication:** Quality or quantity of communication

2e. **Team Climate and Morale:** Prevailing norms, Behaviours or attitudes in work unit

2f. **Performance Management and Feedback:** supervisory effectiveness in performance coaching, work assignment and support; feedback (or lack of) given outside of regular performance appraisal

2g. **Performance Appraisal and Grading:** Disagreements with the fairness of performance. evaluation or grading

2h. **Other**

3. Peer and Colleague Relationships

(Excluding harassment, discrimination and retaliation)

3a. **Interpersonal Differences:** Interpersonal conflict involving differences in personalities/ Suspicions of hidden motives/mistrust/ different work styles

3b. **Respect/Treatment:** Demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness; unfair or preferential treatment

3c. **Reputation:** Potential impact of rumors or gossip about professional or personal matters

3d. **Communication:** Quality or quantity of communication

3e. **Team Climate and Morale:** Prevailing norms, Behaviours or attitudes in work unit

3f. **Other**

4. Job and Career Progression

4a. **Job Application/Selection and Recruitment Processes** (recruitment and selection processes, facilitation of job applications, short-listing and criteria for selection, disputed decisions linked to recruitment and selection)

4b. **Post Classification and Description**

4c. **Involuntary Transfer/Change of Assignment:** Removal from prior duties, unrequested change of work tasks

4d. **Terms/Conditions of Contract:** Position security/Ambiguity/Contractual limitations

4e. **Career Progression or Opportunities:** Delay/denial of promotion; lack of opportunities for career advancement

4f. **Rotation & Duration of Assignment:** Non-completion or over-extension in a job or location; area of rotation

4g. **Resignation**

4h. **Termination**

4i. **Non-renewal of Contract**

4j. **Abolition of Post**

4k **Career Development:** Coaching/mentoring/ training/lack of opportunities for skill development

4m. **Retirement Process**

4n. **Special Leave:** Approval of; return from SLWOP, SLWFP, excluding suspension for disciplinary reasons

4o. **Loan/ Secondment/Transfer:** Inter-agency mobility; terms of loan, return from loan

4p. **Other**

5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance

5a. **Criminal Activity:** Threatened, planned, observed; fraud

5b. **Waste and Abuse of Funds:** Inappropriate actions that abuse or waste organizational finances, facilities or equipment; property damage

5c. **Harassment (Excluding Sexual):** Behaviours that creates a hostile or intimidating work environment ;bullying/mobbing, abusive, threatening or coercive behavior

5d. **Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome sexual conduct

5e. **Discrimination (Excluding Gender):** Different treatment compared with others or exclusion from some benefit on the basis of, for example, race, age, national origin, religion, etc.

5f. **Gender Discrimination:** Different treatment compared with others or exclusion from some benefit on the basis of gender

5g. **Retaliation:** Punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments; whistleblower

5h. **Investigative/Disciplinary Processes:** fairness/duration/ adherence to rules and regulations during investigations and or/disciplinary measures.

5j. **Visa Status:** Issues arising in acquiring or relinquishing travel or residency status for international staff members or their dependents

5k. **Geographic and Gender Representation:** Non compliance with policy or issues arising from the application of policy

5l. **Other**

6. Safety, Health, Wellbeing, Stress and Work/Life

6a. **Safety:** Physical safety, injury, meeting local requirements for training and equipment

6b. **Physical Working/Living Conditions:** Temperature, odors, noise, available space, lighting, cleanliness, etc

6c. **Security:** Adequate lighting, metal detectors, guards, limited access to building by outsiders, anti-terrorists measures

6d. **Work/ Life:** Issues with flexible working arrangements/schedules.

6e. **Stress:** Stress deriving from work related issues; post-traumatic stress

6f. **Disability and Accessibility:** Temporary, permanent, reasonable accommodation, assistive technology

6.g. **Other**

7. Services/Administration

7a. **Quality of Services:** How well services were provided, accuracy or thoroughness of information, competence, etc

7b. **Responsiveness/Timeliness:** Response time or time to completion

7c. **Interpretation or Application of Rules:** Impact of non-disciplinary decisions, excluding formal admin. reviews

7d. **Behaviour of Service Provider(s):** How an administrator or staff member spoke to or dealt with a constituent, customer, or client, e.g., rude, inattentive, or impatient

7e. **Other**

8. Organizational, Leadership and Management

8a. **Organizational Climate/Morale at the Organizational Level** *(Distinct from 2e and 3e)*

8b. **Organizational Culture**

8c. **Organizational Communication:** Content, style, timing, effects and amount; quality of communication about strategic issues at the organizational level *(Distinct from 2d and 3d)*

8d. **Change Management:** Making, responding or adapting to organizational changes, quality of leadership in facilitating organizational change on a large scale.

8e. **Restructuring and Relocation:** Effects of reprofiling, organizational/unit downsizing relocation or reorganization

8f. **Leadership and Management (Quality/ Capacity of Management):** Quality/capacity of management/leadership decisions; management styles; accountability and transparency; priority setting and/or funding

8g. **Abuse of Authority/Positional Power:** Improper use of a position of influence, power or authority against subordinates

8h. **Other**

9. Values, Ethics and Standards

9a. **Core Values:** Non adherence to core organizational values (integrity, professionalism, respect for diversity)

9b. **Accountability and Transparency:** Issues with taking personal ownership for responsibilities and deliverables/operating in compliance with organizational rules and regulations, secrecy

9c. **Personal Conduct:** Issues with fulfilling private obligations, respecting local laws and using the privileges and immunities of the organization

9d. **Conflict of Interest:** Appearing to benefit improperly or to have a third party benefit improperly from certain associations, relationships or financial interests (including honors, gifts or remuneration, favoritism to family or friends, outside employment/ activities; business interests…)

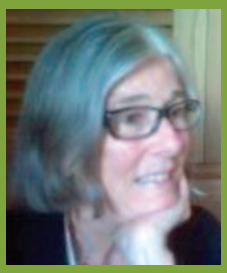
9e. **Use and Protection of Information:** Using or divulging confidential information without proper authorization

9f. **Other**

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Office of the Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman is headed by the Ombudsmen Ms Mame Diagne and Mr. Helmut Buss assisted by Ms. Kentaro Kanyomozi, Case Manager, Ms. Nancy Ross, Administrative Associate, Ms. Sharon Gordon-Smith Administrative Assistant and on-call consultants: Mr. Kojo Gyasi, Mr. James Lee, Ms. Rosemary McCreery, Mr. Eskandar Rastegar, Ms. Judit Revesz and Ms. Linda Schieber.







Top – left to right: Linda Schieber and Rosemary McCreery

Below – front row left to right: Eskandar Rastegar, Mame Diagne, Helmut Buss, Sharon Gordon-Smith
Back row left to right: Kentaro Kanyomozi, Kojo Gyasi, Judit Revesz, Nancy Ross, James Lee



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