

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

1 January - 31 December 2012



Working together to find solutions



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Introduction

The year 2012 marked the tenth anniversary of offering ombudsman and mediation services to the Funds and Programmes. In the first report, issued in 2012, it was noted that “The Ombudsperson mechanism is an important means by which organizations can learn from their own internal problems and improve on the effectiveness and morale of their staff”. Experience shows that this approach to informal conflict resolution remains true today. The Ombudsman continues to be an important tool for the processing of grievances and the identification of root causes of conflicts in the Funds and Programmes. Making this tool known and accessible to all, however, remains a challenge.

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This was the key message of the Ombudsmen as they strengthened outreach efforts during 2012 to address the high demand from the Funds and Programme workforce at all levels to learn more about conflict-resolution tools.

The emphasis throughout the year was that instead of waiting until a conflict arises, staff and management should be aware of the ways in which the Office of the Ombudsman functions, how it can offer opportunities, empower employees and build conflict management capacity. An equally vital message is the importance of contacting the Office as early as possible should a conflict arise. While the goal of conflict-preparedness is uppermost on the agenda of the Ombudsmen, they realize that many people shy away from it, thinking and hoping that they will not be involved in workplace

conflict and thereby not arming themselves with available information.

The Ombudsmen will continue to pursue a vigorous course of multilevel action to convey the mission of the Office, building on, for example, participation in organizational initiatives that enhance conflict management competence and leadership quality in the workplace. During the reporting period, the Ombudsmen seized opportunities to train and coach employees in dispute-resolution techniques and to share information and insight on leadership, accountability and abrasive behaviour in the workplace.

The neutral role of an ombudsman in managing expectations is a key factor in conflict management and one that is often misunderstood. An ombudsman is not an advocate for any of the parties requesting services and cannot assume the role of those who work in the formal system of justice. Nevertheless, it is not unusual for a visitor to contact the Office of the Ombudsman with a request to investigate alleged misconduct or to obtain support in drafting a request for management evaluation. In such cases, the Ombudsmen will refer the visitor to the appropriate services. The Office seeks to add value to the functioning of the organization through objective, informal interventions not only in the cases that it receives but in all activities in which it is involved.

The Office of the Ombudsman addressed the informal resolution of conflict in 2012 against a backdrop of organizational change and restructuring, which frequently brings an element of uncertainty. The Funds and Programmes are adapting to economic factors and identifying ways of being more flexible without undermining efficiency. The question often arises: How can trust and transparency be maintained while continuing to motivate the workforce and boost morale in a workplace that

is challenged by a reduction of funds and resources? With this in mind, staff and management at all levels have increasingly contacted the Office to address concerns about the implications of downsizing and restructuring in the workplace. The Office is uniquely placed to hear concerns from the perspectives of senior management and other employees about maintaining fairness and due process under the current severe financial constraints.

Clearly, the Funds and Programmes workplace is dynamic and complex, changing its profile and needs to suit an ever-challenging environment. The particular role that the Office of the Ombudsman plays in fostering trust in the workplace is crucial and is illustrated in the increasing number of invitations that the Office has received to make presentations at inductions and at staff association and management meetings. The benefit of having a safe space where a solution-focused discussion can be held confidentially with a neutral person in an informal manner cannot be underscored more so than in times of change and uncertainty. The Ombudsmen have helped to examine options for maintaining a positive manager-employee relationship, which is a key element for employee engagement at a time of organizational change and during workplace conflict. In this context, the various contractual modalities available to the Funds and Programmes may themselves give rise to conflict. For example, tensions may mount when independent contractors are hired to work alongside staff members under different conditions of service and entitlements or between national and international staff due to different expectations and opportunities available for career advancement. A visit by the Ombudsmen to a Funds and Programmes Office at times of rising tension and conflict often serves to provide opportunities to listen, explore options and coach staff at all levels.

The Office of the Ombudsman is encouraged by the responses that have been received from the Executive Offices of the Funds and Programmes to its recommendations. It

is equally encouraging that the organizations have made commendable efforts in following up on some of the systemic issues identified by the Office. In particular, some Funds and Programmes are striving to communicate clearly and more frequently with staff affected by

organizational change so as to build ownership and cooperation in the process and to let them know what to expect. Nevertheless, this is an area where much can be improved, particularly with regard to long-serving staff members facing separation from service, who have spoken to the Ombudsmen of feeling abandoned, battered, ignored and disillusioned after a career of contributing to the goals of the United Nations. It is very important to bear in mind that the rationale for change is rarely in dispute by those affected by change; rather, it is the ways in which change is implemented, its frequency and logistics that cause tension and are a root cause of conflict in the workplace. The Office was also encouraged to see some efforts at strengthening performance management in the workplace through the revision of performance-management policies and the training of experts in resolving performance disputes. While managers are increasingly made aware of how to manage those whose performance falls short of expectations, much remains to be done and the Office continues to receive requests in this regard.

How can trust and transparency be maintained while continuing to motivate the workforce and boost morale in a workplace that is challenged by a reduction of funds and resources?

The Office of the Ombudsman maintains dedicated services to its constituents and at the same time participates equally in activities that contribute to the mandate of the integrated Office of United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services (UNOMS). These include common outreach tools such as a website, brochure and posters in addition to participating in case-debrief meetings where system-wide conflict issues and practices are identified with a view to sharing best practices and increasing efficiencies in addressing conflict in the United Nations workplace. While it is important to note that in the five years of its existence, the integrated UNOMS office has made

great strides in collaborating on a number of initiatives, there still remains a lot to be achieved. The Office continues to look forward to timely, constructive collaboration on common initiatives such as the use of the common database and the promulgation of terms of reference, operational guidelines and standard practices.

As in previous years, the current report addresses familiar forms of conflict in the workplace. It also highlights the importance of having a systemic, collaborative approach to dealing with conflict. The report discusses conflict management systems, career aspects in times of change and restructuring, and abrasive behaviour in the workplace.

Overview of the work of the Office from 1 January to 31 December 2012

A. Overview of cases

The Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes dealt with a total of 383 cases in the period under review. Figure 1 shows a breakdown of the numbers of cases by organization.

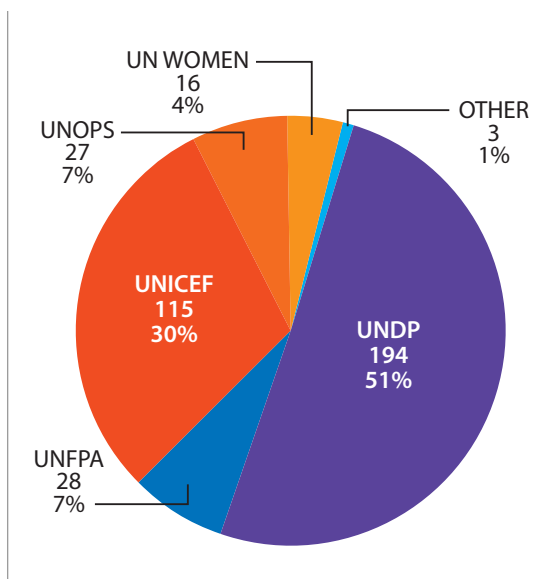
B. Field visits

Field visits give an opportunity to the workforce of the Funds and Programmes to meet the Ombudsmen or their representatives face to face. During a field visit, the Ombudsmen or team members of the Office of the Ombudsman invite all those holding contracts with the Funds and Programmes to interactive meetings and workshop activities. The Ombudsmen usually invite participants to reflect on conflict dynamics, including elements that cause conflict in the workplace and the options and tools available to everyone to manage disputes and contribute to conflict resolution. A field visit is also an opportunity for the Ombudsmen to interact with management as well as staff representatives. The Ombudsmen visited a total of nine countries in five regions. Figure 2 shows a breakdown of cases that the Office received at headquarters and those received from country offices.

C. Outreach activities

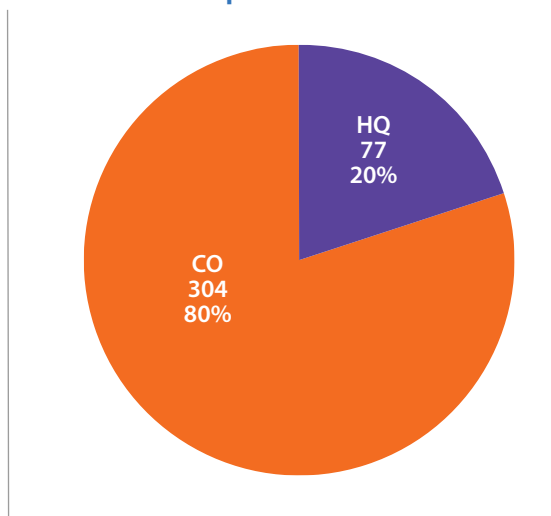
As part of its mandate to foster a harmonious, productive work environment and thereby contribute to greater organizational efficiency, the Office of the Ombudsman continued to engage with workplace conflict management stakeholders such as representatives of human resources departments, management and staff councils and staff associations. The Ombudsmen were encouraged by the response and engagement that all stakeholders demonstrated at

Figure 1. Cases received from 1 January to 31 December 2012



Note: Other includes cases from other UN agencies.

Figure 2. All cases, 2012, country offices vs. headquarters



various meetings conducted on conflict resolution in the workplace. These meetings with global and local staff associations, executive heads and senior management of the Funds and Programmes provided an opportunity for constructive, transparent communication on the challenges and possible avenues for greater collaboration on issues identified as the underlying causes of conflict in the workplace. In addition, the Office was invited to make contributions to initiatives by key offices in the United Nations Internal Justice system. These initiatives include peer review reports by ethics offices as well as periodic meetings with legal representatives and investigation offices.

The Office of the Ombudsman participated in organizational training initiatives aimed at contributing to the strengthening of conflict management competence in new recruits as well as experienced employees. Of particular note are the various induction programmes for country representatives and emerging talent initiatives that took place during the year. The Office welcomes such opportunities not only to share practices on how to resolve workplace disputes but also to raise awareness of the value added in having a safe space to discuss and address disagreements in a confidential manner and to build a cadre of “ambassadors” who can promote good management practices throughout the organizations.

In January, the Office of the Ombudsman attended the annual general meeting of the United Nations and Related International Organizations (UNARIO), a network of ombudsmen and mediators in the United Nations and Bretton Woods system. The meetings provide a valuable opportunity for the exchange of professional ideas on the tools available to the ombudsmen and mediators to discharge their functions, share best practices and strengthen interagency cooperation while maintaining each organization’s autonomy.

D. Respectful Workplace Advisors

The Office of the Ombudsman has piloted a range of strategies and mechanisms to enhance the conflict management capacities within different organizations. These include the concept of the Respectful Workplace Advisor (RWA), originally developed by

the World Bank and also implemented by United Nations organizations such as UNHCR and WFP. In piloting the RWA approach, the Office is critically aware of the perceived risk that the involvement of too many individuals in conflict management can lead to a problem of conflicting jurisdictions. It has been observed, for example, that RWAs compete with peer support counsellors while the staff representatives state that their role as conflict focal points and advisers has been weakened by other structures. In addition many managers claim that, with so many persons involved in the process, they are deprived of the possibility of resolving conflict as part of their own responsibilities. On the other hand, the experience of organizations implementing the RWA concept shows that RWAs provide peer support in orienting colleagues in conflict, that the concept has significant outreach potential and that it is perceived by the users as complementary to other existing grievance mechanisms.

In an attempt to involve existing conflict management stakeholders and build broader ownership for an RWA network operating as part of a larger conflict management system, the Office of the Ombudsman has supported regional efforts to organize RWA training, involving not only future RWAs but also human resources staff, staff representatives and peer support volunteers. The Office will continue to pilot the RWA approach in selected regions that request it and are able to fund related training. Building on the ongoing pilot programmes, the Office will assess with the Funds and Programmes their readiness to integrate the RWA approach into their conflict management systems and to provide the necessary funding.

The pilot programmes also aim at illustrating the potential of the RWA contribution to effective conflict management and mitigation of costs involved in badly managed conflict. Importantly, the assessment of RWA programmes in other organizations has shown that RWA programmes need to be appropriately funded to ensure the quality of the RWAs and their intervention. It is only through adequate resources that the RWA programme has the potential to be successful with a return on investment that can be demonstrated.

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. Conflict management systems

The issue

A conflict management system that is effective takes into account the processes, the people, the rules, the physical environment, the control and grievance mechanisms as well as less visible attributes in the organizational culture such as attitudes, beliefs and values. In this systemic approach, rather than addressing conflict resolution on a case-by-case basis alone, conflict management is defined as a mechanism in which the different components are interrelated, integrated parts in an organizational environment. This enables all stakeholders to participate in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict in a comprehensive, systemic manner. This approach also suggests that conflict management should build on existing stakeholders and structures, rather than create new ones. Such a systemic approach aims at offering people a choice of options by interconnecting all available options and functions. As a result, it has the potential to drive the transformation of organizational culture by helping to create a culture of conflict management competency.

It has become increasingly apparent and a signal for action that a lack of engagement and investment in conflict management systems has negative effects on organizations, for example: loss of efficiency, high direct and indirect costs of conflict, employee discontent and high staff turnover and disregarding the potential for change.

Integrated conflict management systems are meant to support an environment in which managers are expected to prevent, manage, contain and resolve conflict at the earliest time and lowest level possible. To achieve these objectives, such systems

have to provide support mechanisms, including training, coaching, policies and procedures.

To date, the Office of the Ombudsman has achieved only partial success in its endeavour to link up those officials in the various organizations who are concerned with conflict management. None of the five funds and programmes has a post at the senior management level whose duties include a clearly defined mandate for the coordination of a conflict management system. As a consequence, the actors involved in conflict management tend to work in parallel rather than together. The Ombudsmen have found that regular meetings enable everyone involved to exchange experience of the problems encountered and the steps that can be taken by management to remedy the situation. Coordination of this kind will be effective, however, only if the necessary authority is vested in these officials through their connection with the management, if their responsibilities are properly defined, and if the direct benefit to an organization's business operation of a conflict management system of this kind is recognized. Only then can it be fully integrated into the organizational strategy. The Office has the task of steering this process and throughout its meetings with the executive leadership and human resources divisions has received broad support for the idea of more frequent and joint dialogue among conflict management stakeholders. By way of example, the model in figure 3 shows the complexity of coordinating a number of areas that need to be addressed to establish an effective conflict resolution system. The Ombudsmen believe that this model (developed by the European University Viadrina/PricewaterhouseCoopers in the study *Conflict Management: From the Elements to the System*, July, 2011) contains a number of elements on

which the Funds and Programmes could build. While the Office has managed to initiate stakeholder meetings in some of the funds and programmes covered, such meetings are not yet held on as regular a basis as intended.

It is important to note that none of the organizations served by the Office of the Ombudsman has integrated the risks associated with a less-than-ideal conflict management process into their risk-management system.

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This is an area, however, where the Ombudsmen of the United Nations Funds and Programmes have made some progress. Working in a context where all the Funds and Programmes depend on voluntary contributions, which have declined considerably in the current economic climate, organizations are increasingly

discovering the heavy costs that deficient or ineffective conflict management have on their budgets, human resources and reputation. In some of these

organizations, the first steps are currently being taken to integrate the risks associated with inadequate conflict management into their existing enterprise risk management systems. This is most often achieved by bringing together around the table those with soft skills (e.g., representatives of human resources departments) and those with hard skills (e.g., representatives of budget, finance, and the Controller's Office) in order to identify – and, ideally, to quantify – the negative effects of poor conflict management or, at the very least, to select appropriate indicators that can be used to offset these negative effects. In this way, at least a start has been made.

What can the organization do?

For conflict management systems to be successful, the expressed commitment from senior management is essential at an early stage. In addition to management support, a long-term strategy needs to be developed and the associated budget approved to undertake successfully the tasks and objectives relating to conflict management. This must build on a corporate understanding of the financial, human and reputational risks of badly managed conflict.

Figure 3. The Viadrina component model of a conflict management system¹



¹ http://www.europa-uni.de/de/forschung/institut/institut_ikm/publikationen/Studie_Conflict_Management_English_Summary.pdf

What can the Ombudsman do?

The Office of the Ombudsman can facilitate the building and strengthening of ongoing dialogue among the stakeholders; share trends in the Funds and Programmes that contribute to conflict potential; assist in collecting data on the cost benefits of informal conflict resolution; and share experience of systems for conflict management and the management of the costs of conflict in other organizations.

B. Career and talent management

The issue

Through its career and talent management process, an organization ensures that staff skills and personalities are aligned with the operational and programmatic framework. This often means hiring the right person for the right job at the right time. The Office of the Ombudsman is encouraged by efforts that are being made by the Funds and Programmes in this regard. While there have been many initiatives to invite and nurture talent, a question that still remains is how does an organization monitor and sustain talent management programmes especially in an environment where the Funds and Programmes operate with less funding?

It is not unusual for organizations to run the risk in the current financial climate of treating their staff as expenses rather than assets. This results in a waste of investment and resources. The Office of the Ombudsman sometimes receives visits from staff members who have served the organization for a number of years with good performance records, only to discover that their post has been abolished. As a rule, a staff member in such a situation has applied to a number of positions and has failed to secure an interview. It is understandable that years of experience do not automatically qualify a candidate for an interview; the experience must, of course, be relevant and suit the tasks envisaged. However, the organization has invested scarce resources over the years to ensure that employees are adequately trained, update their skills and are capable of successfully carrying out challenging tasks relevant to its mandate. In these circumstances, it is sometimes difficult to understand why the same organization cannot identify opportunities that could make use of the experience and skills of a staff member in this category. What is usually required in most instances is dialogue on where the aggrieved

staff member stands with regard to workforce succession planning. The absence of such a dialogue, which should involve not only human resources but also – and primarily – managers, creates anxiety and tension in the workplace.

What can the organization do?

In some organizations, the talent management programme is highly developed and care is taken to ensure that the workforce is kept informed of developments such as changing objectives that may have an impact on continuing employability. Proactive guidance is available and efforts are made to assist the members of the workforce to re-engineer their skills. It is important for all organizations to remember that the workforce is their greatest asset and to take into account the human dimension when embarking on new initiatives; they should avoid giving even the impression of regarding staff as a liability. In the experience of the Ombudsmen, when staff members are regarded as a liability, they can easily become one with resulting conflict, even law suits. It is also important for the organizations to remember that when staff feel badly treated, the word spreads quickly and causes reputational damage.

What can the Ombudsman do?

It is sometimes possible for the Ombudsmen to initiate dialogue between the individual and the organization with a view to discussing options in a more constructive manner. An individual's self-confidence may have been so badly eroded by the sudden change in professional standing and the accompanying silence from the organization that she or he feels rejected and incapable of starting a job search. It appears that the only assistance from the organization is to facilitate separation from service. Through open dialogue, other realistic options may surface.

It is important for all organizations to remember that the workforce is their greatest asset and to take into account the human dimension when embarking on new initiatives; they should avoid giving even the impression of regarding staff as a liability.

C. Restructuring and organizational change

The issue

The Ombudsmen understand that change management and restructuring are essential elements for responsible and accountable governance in the Funds and Programmes. In periods of financial constraint, organizations must go back to the drawing board to reconfigure themselves and make the most efficient use of public money to fulfil their mission. This often means a reduction in staff, a reclassification of posts and, in some cases, a complete overhaul of the workplace structure, mandate and location.

In addressing conflict in the Funds and Programmes workplace, particularly conflict emanating from restructuring and change management situations, the Office of the Ombudsman has observed four elements that often cause tension: ad hoc decision-making in the absence of an underlying long-term vision and strategy; ineffective communication; lack of transparency in budgetary decision-making; and ambiguity in the process of abolition of posts.

The Office of the Ombudsman has received a number of grievances that demonstrate that when faced with change, supervisors are under a lot of pressure to take decisions on the continued employment of some staff. How supervisors communicate their decisions is often as important as the decision

itself. Visitors have disclosed to the Office that they had recently been summoned by their supervisor to a meeting, sometimes after working hours, to speak about their future in the organization. The

conversation is often quite tense and may be peppered with phrases from the supervisor like, 'you are not a good fit for the team,' 'you might want to think about early retirement,' 'your experience is more suited elsewhere.' However it is handled, the discussion is frequently a startling revelation for the supervisee, who has often never had a career conversation with the supervisor.

Restructuring is a highly stressful situation for all parties concerned. It is also a period of uncertainty in which managers are often challenged to give answers that they may not be prepared to provide.

The Office of the Ombudsman has received grievances that demonstrate that, once again, instead of management entering into dialogue with staff affected by change, there is a tendency to leave the communication of the change to a third party who is unfamiliar with the context within which the change is occurring.

Another factor that is often raised when restructuring takes place is the issue of core-budget posts and those on extrabudgetary funds. The Office has seen cases where a staff member who was initially hired on a core-budget post finds that when restructuring takes place, the post is suddenly indicated as being on an extrabudgetary account. The staff member's post is then abolished because there is a lack of funding in the extrabudgetary account. Upon investigation, it is found that the decision to put the position on an extrabudgetary account was made earlier without the staff member's knowledge.

Lack of transparency regarding fund allocation, especially in situations of organizational change and restructuring, often means that there is no ownership and thus no accountability from those who are responsible for implementing the change. The Office has received reports from visitors who, during an integration process, have been recruited into their positions without a supervisor or support staff owing to lack of funding. Nevertheless, they are still expected to deliver at full capacity. This presents multiple challenges not only to the individual staff member but also to the organization.

Sometimes, long-serving staff members are informed through a telephone conversation or by email that their posts are going to be abolished. In other situations, some staff with over five years of service have been informed in writing that their contracts will not be renewed because the post has been abolished. When a staff member's contract is not renewed for this reason, especially in the case of long-serving staff members, there is a perception that the organization is trying to avoid paying rightfully accrued indemnities and dues arising from the abolished post, rather preferring to allow the contract to expire and thus avoid paying a termination indemnity. It is important for organizations to set down clearly in writing the processes for separation, minimizing the risk of confusion and misinterpretation. Abolition of post often entails a separate administrative process that is different from the

How supervisors communicate their decisions is often as important as the decision itself.

non-renewal of contract; it also entails rights and brings accrued benefits for the long-serving staff member. In situations such as restructuring, where trust levels are usually low and communication often sporadic at best, it is important that ambiguities are clarified at the outset to avoid confusion and tension in what is already a stressful process. It is equally important for the organization to honour and recognize the years of service of long-serving staff on fixed-term, permanent or continuing contracts when their contracts come to an end. Figure 4 depicts the percentage of cases within the last three years that address the issues of restructuring, relocation and change management.

What can the organization do?

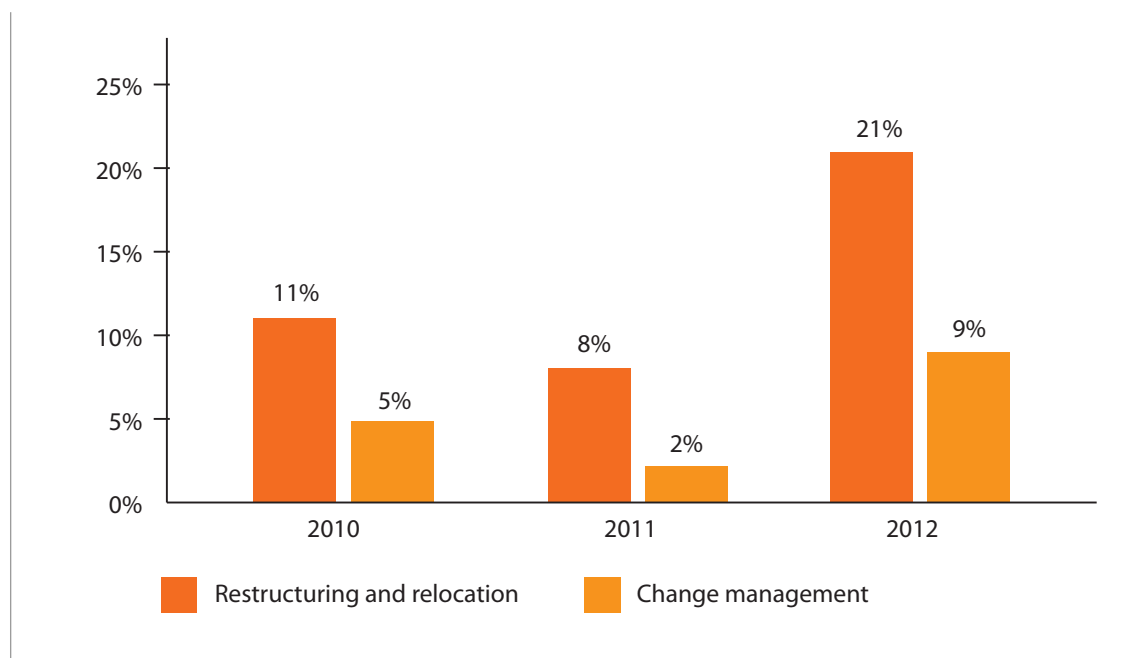
In devising long-term vision and strategy supported by a robust communication strategy in a restructuring process, the Funds and Programmes should not only communicate the rationale for change but also the ways in which change is going to be implemented. This should include options that will be available to staff who are unsuccessful in obtaining posts during the restructuring and notifications to staff whose posts have changed owing to budgetary considerations.

The organizations should try to minimize the ad hoc characteristics that seem to have become a part of change and restructuring efforts. Action to address this should be coordinated by headquarters or through the regional divisions and bureaux.

It is important that the organizations develop an inventory of available skills before entering into a restructuring exercise. Management should analyse the skills that the current workforce possesses before deciding to search externally for other candidates. The objective is for an organization to have continuity and to offer opportunities to internal candidates. This should ensure that skills that have been obtained by long-serving staff remain and are taken advantage of by the organization instead of forcing staff to look elsewhere to use their skills. This kind of planning would help to give an idea of where the skills deficiencies lie.

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Figure 4. Restructuring, relocation and change management 2010-2012



What can the Ombudsman do?

The Office of the Ombudsman has rendered assistance to managers who have been given the responsibility of implementing a restructuring process.

In devising long-term vision and strategy supported by a robust communication strategy in a restructuring process, the Funds and Programmes should not only communicate the rationale for change but also the ways in which change is going to be implemented.

These managers are often eager to discuss what to expect when it comes to anticipating conflict and tension when restructuring takes place. They pay particular attention to best practices that have been used by other offices and rely on the Ombudsmen to act as a sounding board to approaches and ideas of how to handle particular situations.

The Ombudsmen have also been able to assist staff seeking options when faced with an impending restructuring process. Tensions often rise in periods of uncertainty and although the Office of the Ombudsman is not a career counselling service, its services are accessible to help all members of the work force of

the Funds and Programmes to explore the different options that are available to those who are unsuccessful in obtaining a position after restructuring.

D. Job and career issues

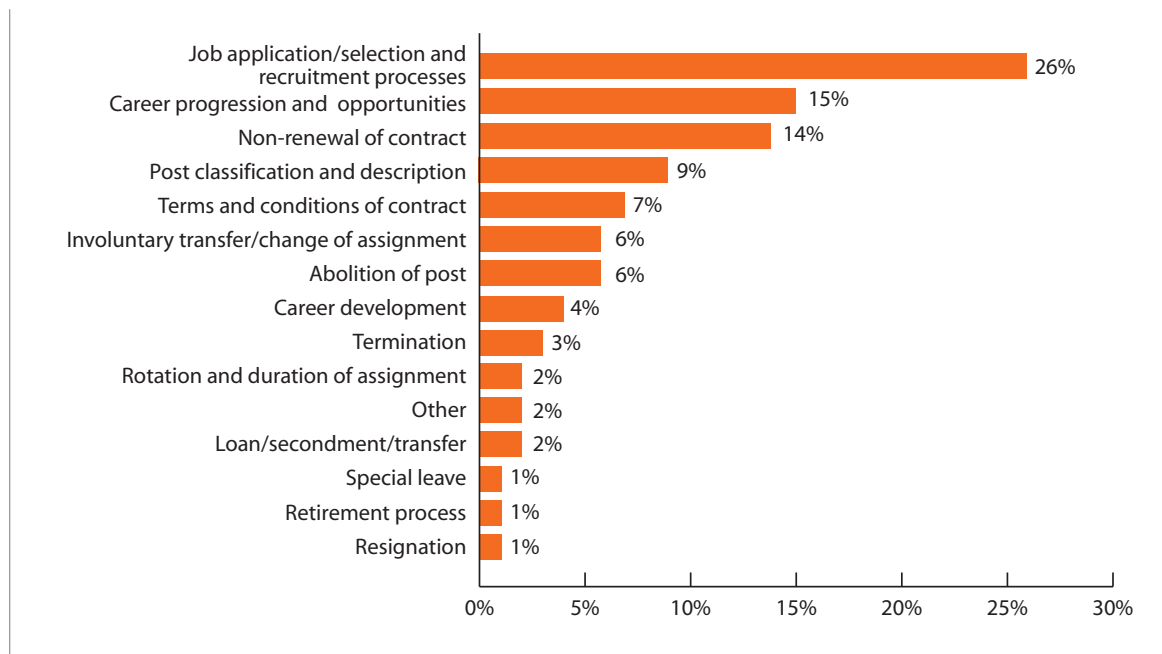
The issue

The main reason that most people have sought the services of the Office of the Ombudsman over the past 10 years is to address conflict surrounding job and career issues. During the reporting period, the Office handled issues pertaining to feedback mechanisms, recruitment, induction programmes, and inter-agency mobility and separation procedures. A breakdown of the issues within the job- and career-related category is provided in figure 5.

The Office of the Ombudsman continues to receive visitors concerned by the lack of feedback after unsuccessfully applying for a position. The expectation of constructive feedback rises according to the years of experience and type of contract and is particularly heightened in situations where a post has been abolished.

When restructuring and re-profiling take place, there are often challenges to the decision-making process on grounds of fairness and transparency.

Figure 5. Job- and career-related issues



A decision not to recruit one person in favour of another may be perceived as favouritism or retaliation. However, it is equally important to remember that applying for any position carries with it the risk of rejection; a decision not to recruit a particular candidate is not necessarily unfair. Nevertheless, the Office of the Ombudsman is often contacted by employees who believe that a recruitment decision is arbitrary and biased. Once again, this raises questions on the quality – or lack – of feedback, this time following an interview.

In addition, visitors report that it can be very difficult at times to get information from representatives of human resources. Either there is a perceived unwillingness to share or the human resource contact person does not return telephone calls or reply to emails in a timely manner. Some visitors say that they feel they have been reduced to beggars because they have to keep trying and trying just to get acknowledgment – and the Ombudsman can on occasion empathize with that feeling.

And so what happens? The Office of the Ombudsman may appear persistent, causing irritation at a time when new approaches are being introduced and the human face at times seems to have disappeared from interaction between staff and human resources services. Persistence should not be mistaken for advocacy. It is possible to be persistent and remain objective, as demonstrated in the daily work carried out by ombudsmen throughout the United Nations system and beyond.

A good recruitment decision can be sustained only by an equally good induction programme: at all levels of recruitment, the organization should invest in sharing with new staff its values, ethics and culture and equip them with the knowledge that will help them to integrate swiftly and effectively into their new work environment. Staff familiar not only with the deliverables of the position but with the organizational culture and performance expectations are likely to be more efficient. It is not unusual for visitors to the Office of the Ombudsman to describe workplace disputes that result from not having been informed, as part of the initial orientation, of a particular practice or operational requirement. While it is the responsibility of all members of the workforce to educate themselves on these matters, the organization likewise bears the responsibility of communicating clearly the basics of orga-

nizational functionality to all contract holders when they are recruited.

Being able to work in more than one organization of the United Nations system enables staff to broaden their experience and skills. Furthermore, inter-agency mobility allows for an efficient use of in-house talent. However, the Office of the Ombudsman has been contacted by staff members who are on an interagency mobility option such as secondment with concerns that on returning to their parent organizations, any advancement or promotion in the receiving organization is not unrecognized. In other words, a staff member who has gained a higher level and several steps on secondment has to return to the parent organization on a lateral move, often at a lower step than she or he had gained during the secondment. Even worse, there is sometimes no post to which the staff member can return and who, in this case, faces separation from service. None of these scenarios encourage staff members to take advantage of mobility instruments available and ultimately become an impediment to interagency mobility policy and strategy.

In times of organizational change, the Office of the Ombudsman has noticed that questions arise around the placement of staff. Usually this entails the placement of an individual in a particular position without going through the usual recruitment process. Sometimes this process is called a desk-review, sometimes strategic placement. In this scenario, the organization does not follow the standard recruitment process because there is an organizational need to place the candidate immediately. When such circumstances arise, it would be helpful to everybody if the performance of the new recruit were to be actively monitored not only to ensure that the objective for which the strategic placement is being achieved but also to confirm that the candidate has adapted to the office and organizational culture and practices. This is especially important if the person has been recruited from outside the organization.

Visitors have reported that when they are faced with separation they do not know where to go to get

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information at such a critical time in their lives. Despite writing or speaking to the human resources

services, most often repeatedly, asking for information, they report that they receive no or inadequate feedback. It is usually at this juncture that they approach the Office of the Ombudsman. They know that the Ombudsmen cannot find a job for them and any promise to do so is never made, of course. They want information and they want action. Being strung out week after week, month after month, adds to the anxiety, increases stress and causes some people to consider dire actions – all because they feel ignored owing to the lack of response. In this situation,

they sometimes conclude that the organization either does not care what happens to them or is planning some action that will have irreversible, negative consequences – and such planned action must therefore not be shared with the staff members to avoid any pre-emptive moves on their part.

In these circumstances (e. g., abolition of post timed to coincide with non-renewal of contract; rejection of candidature for a vacancy on unexplained grounds; removal from post in a harassing manner and placement in a post for which the staff member, reaching retirement age, has no training; vague, unsubstantiated reasons for moving to separate a long-serving senior staff member), open, constructive dialogue, once again, is the key missing element.

What can the organization do?

The Administration should improve the quality and frequency of its feedback, especially in situations where, following the abolition of a post, staff are engaged in seeking other opportunities and have requested feedback that could better position them in their job search. The Office of the Ombudsman is sensitive to the fact that an organization will have to reduce staff either because of

financial constraints or because of changing priorities. In the experience of the Ombudsmen, this very difficult process can be successfully implemented only if there is a culture of engagement within the organization. The organization should make it a priority to provide feedback to its staff despite the limitations it may be working under. Using the Office of the Ombudsman to fulfil the task of communicating reasons why an administrative decision has been made, for example, is not a correct use of the ombudsman function.

The Funds and Programmes should maintain the principles of transparency in recruitment, especially when the Administration decides that a desk-review or a strategic placement is in the best interests of the organization. In addition, the Funds and Programmes should increase the frequency of monitoring staff that have been recruited following such a process.

While the Funds and Programmes do have induction programmes, it seems that they are not fully implemented nor are they of the kind recommended earlier in this section. The organizations should make efforts not only to ensure that all staff have been given an induction to the organization but also that the quality of the induction allows the staff to have an informed opinion of the practices and culture of the workplace. In order to sustain the momentum introduced during the induction programmes, the Funds and Programmes should introduce mentoring programmes or reinforce those in existence to promote an effective work environment and to provide career guidance and assistance to staff that have been affected by restructuring. As a powerful institutional resource, a mentor can provide useful advice and direction on how to manage careers and where to look for other opportunities, especially to staff whose posts have been abolished.

Inter-agency mobility is a hallmark of the United Nations and is strongly supported by the Secretary-General. While in general the Funds and Programmes encourage staff mobility (with the caveats noted earlier in the present report), it is essential that in succession planning exercises, the Administration include staff on secondment as well as those on special leave in the inventory of skills.

What can the Ombudsman do?

When the visitor gives permission, especially in circumstances where a post has been abolished,

the Office of the Ombudsman may approach the Administration to request that feedback be given to the applicant. As noted above, this is essential for the person whose post has been abolished; it may also be useful in managing conflict in the department or country office affected.

One of the principal services of the Office of the Ombudsman is to assist visitors to examine options; unfortunately, it is impossible to do so when there is a severe lack of information regarding the situation that has brought the visitor to the Office. One possibility is for the Ombudsmen to try to enter into dialogue with representatives of human resources services. In some instances, this can be very valuable since the Ombudsmen may be able to ascertain where the real problem lies and help both the visitor and human resources to address it in a practical, ethical and understanding way.

The Office of the Ombudsman has shared with some representatives of human resources a model for the introduction or strengthening of a mentoring programme.

E. Abrasive behaviour in the workplace

The issue

In its research into the causes of conflict in the workplace and in its professional outreach and exchanges, the Office of the Ombudsman team has found that “abrasive behaviour” is an apt description of how some people show little concern for the feelings of others in the modern workplace. In fact, it has become increasingly clear that the concept of feelings hardly arises in daily work. The widely held myth is that most employees come to the workplace to perform certain defined tasks for which they will receive a certain amount of supervision. They will then return home, where they are allowed to show their feelings. In the view of the Office of the Ombudsman team, this is an unrealistic concept of how employees interact on a daily basis – a more realistic assessment is that feelings are a constant in human life and are consequently very much part of the workplace landscape. The Office does not mean to suggest that employees should therefore focus on feelings instead of tasks but rather that workplace productivity is greatly enhanced when attention is placed on workplace relationships as well as deliverables.

What does abrasive behaviour look like? Abrasive behaviour takes on many forms and usually ranges from deliberate avoidance of interaction to open confrontation. The Office of the Ombudsman has received grievances from visitors who complain that there has been no direct communication with their supervisors. Employees have also asked to see an ombudsman because they felt that their supervisor was undermining their authority. Incidents involving public humiliation at office meetings or private discussions on matters regarding an employee in the absence of the employee concerned have caused unstable working relationships. This abrasive behaviour involves employees in a supervisor/supervisee relationship but also interactions between peers. Below are some quotations from employees who were subjected to abrasive behaviour in their workplace:

“I want an apology. I feel totally humiliated.”

“I feel that my functions are being devalued and undermined. I don’t feel respected as a professional.”

“Everything first is a no and then a yes with no reason to do so. It is unpredictable.”

“I feel like I am a boxing ball between my two supervisors.”

“She always wants to do things the way she wants and doesn’t accept any other ideas or views.”

“He shouted at me ‘do not touch my project.’”

“My supervisor does not delegate but micro-manages everything and it affects the team morale in the office.”

“He shows authoritarian behaviour which brings fear.”

What can the organization do?

Abrasive behaviour can cause extreme suffering in the workplace. It is essential that the Funds and Programmes acknowledge that this type of behaviour exists and is disruptive to the organization’s mandate, results and reputation. They should therefore carefully analyse its underlying causes and take action to assist the parties involved. They should help abrasive individuals to understand the implications of their behaviour instead of ignoring it or personalizing the problem. In dealing with abrasive behaviour, the element of perception is critical.

The effective management of human resources is not the sole responsibility of human resource offices – all supervisors have an essential role to play in this function.

While perception is by its nature subjective and not always a reflection of reality, it can in fact become reality, as anyone subjected to perceived abrasive behaviour can attest. The analysis of what has led to abrasive behaviour in the workplace should therefore focus as much on understanding the perception as on gathering facts.

Senior management should demonstrate that abrasive behaviour will not be tolerated. Self-management skills and emotional intelligence should be considered as core competencies to be systematically assessed at entry level. Those in leadership positions should be recruited for their leadership qualities as well as for their technical skills. Leadership qualities should include interpersonal competence and skills in self-management and emotional intelligence and those recruited in these positions should be prepared to demonstrate

role-model qualities that can be emulated by all.

Senior management should remind supervisors that they are accountable for the overall efficiency and effectiveness of their teams and that through their leadership they bear the responsibility of establishing and maintaining a productive, harmonious

work environment consistent with the ethics of the United Nations. The effective management of human resources is not the sole responsibility of human resource offices – all supervisors have an essential role to play in this function.

The Funds and Programmes may wish to invest in leadership coaching experts to improve the quality of leadership of those already in managerial positions. In the experience of the Ombudsmen, such qualities will not be harnessed solely through routine training exercises on communication or team work. An individualized, tailored approach is usually required for noticeable behavioural change to take place.

The Funds and Programmes also have the option of removing an abrasive manager from a leadership role and transferring the person to a position that does not require the management of people.

What can the Ombudsman do?

Visitors to the Office of the Ombudsman Office sometimes lack a full understanding of what exactly constitutes harassment or abuse of authority. Without providing legal advice, the Office can assist in providing guidance on how to interpret behaviour that is perceived as abusive, including distinguishing responsible managerial responsible action from abusive behaviour and misconduct. This is particularly important in dealing with performance appraisals, when an objective approach may be interpreted as harassment or abuse of authority. The Ombudsmen can help both supervisor and supervisee not to cloud the issue by avoiding inflammatory language and emotional responses.

The Office of the Ombudsman often explores options available to employees who report that they have been affected by abrasive behaviour. The Office has used mediation and has facilitated direct communication between parties to discuss and clarify misunderstanding due to lack of proper communication. Since both parties participate voluntarily in the process, the Ombudsmen make every effort to engage them before a conflict escalates.

By the time that some employees come to the Office of the Ombudsman, they have been affected by the perceived abrasive conduct of another colleague to such an extent that they are unable to fully concentrate on their work. The Office provides coaching sessions and considers ways to empower the visitor to communicate with the supervisor or colleague in order to find a resolution to the differences between them.

It is not unusual for abrasive behaviour to affect an entire office even though only one person is targeted by the perceived aggressor. The Office of the Ombudsman has been invited to consult and train office personnel in how to manage conflict when such behaviour is prevalent.

Performance appraisals and abrasive behaviour

Abrasive behaviour sometimes occurs between supervisors and supervisees during performance appraisals. At these times, the abrasive behaviour is usually reflected through a communication breakdown between the parties, with ensuing feelings of isolation, fear and disrespect. As a result, instead of being used as a tool to build skills and enhance organizational efficiency, the performance appraisal is used as

an opportunity to settle scores and damage professional reputation. Figure 6 shows a breakdown of evaluative relationship issues (i.e., relationships between supervisors and supervisees) brought to the attention of the Office of the Ombudsman.

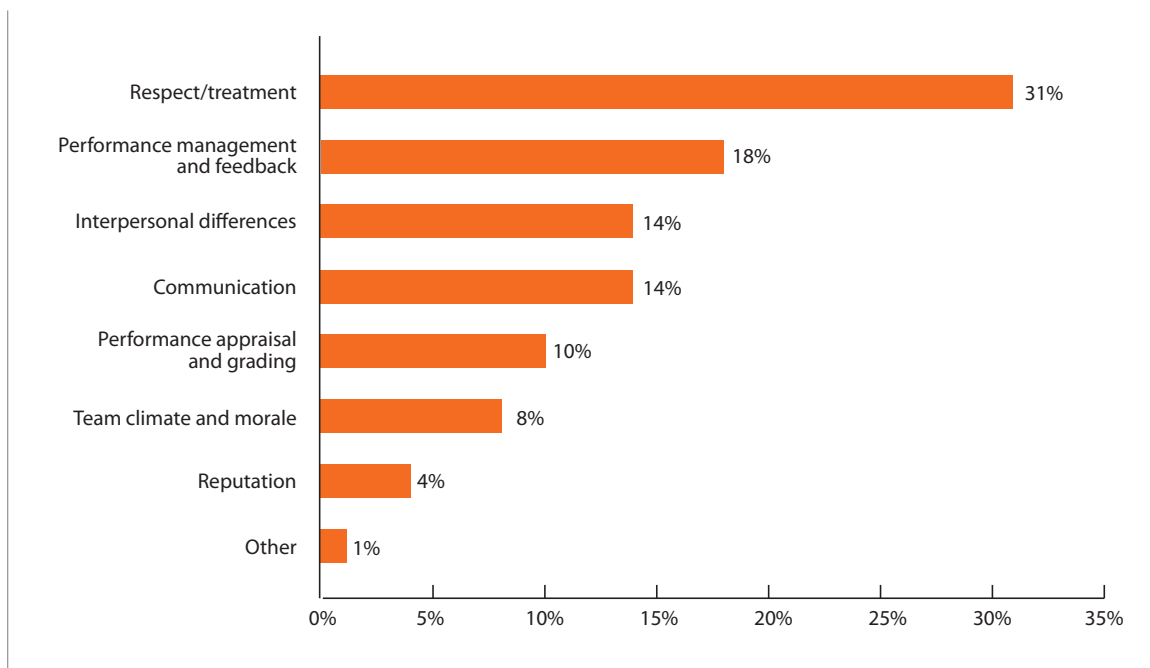
There can never be too much communication when dealing with performance evaluation. It is not enough to relegate performance appraisal to the illusion that communication has taken place. As a basis for giving and receiving feedback, it is irresponsible for both supervisors and supervisees to rely on casual conversations or to address the issue in team meetings. Dialogue should be respectful and continuous, resulting in empathy and understanding by both parties. The Office of the Ombudsman has noticed that in most of the organizations, the supervisors often do not devote sufficient time during working hours throughout the year to engage in ongoing dialogue with their supervisees to discuss performance. It is unquestionably beneficial in many ways when a supervisor gives realistic feedback on a supervisee's performance. Feedback is important not only in areas where the supervisee has been doing well – the supervisor should illustrate through concrete examples where the supervisee needs some improvement and how that can be attained. This kind of approach encourages the development of the supervisee, fosters

a collaborative climate in the workplace and, very importantly, increases the productivity of the entire team in the long term. It also identifies areas where further training or development might be needed. In the event of poor performance, the supervisee has time to address the problems through corrective action. It is vastly preferable for the supervisee to engage in ongoing dialogue rather than to be surprised at hearing at the last moment that performance has been inadequate in some way.

The Office of the Ombudsman has consistently drawn attention to this pattern for the last 10 years. Notwithstanding the efforts some organizations have made in this regard, as noted in the introduction to the present report, the Office has not observed any great changes in that period. Supervisors tend to underutilize the provision of verbal feedback, preferring to give a rating (only a number) in the online performance-appraisal system. This can have little or no meaning for the supervisee. In addition, it creates a conflict at the workplace because it may come as a surprise since expected deliverables for the specific roles (terms of reference are often too generic and

It is not enough to relegate performance appraisal to the illusion that communication has taken place.

Figure 6. Evaluative relationship issues



lack clarity for what exactly is expected) have not been discussed at all in the initial stages. Lots of assumptions are made and it is only when problems arise that both parties, with increasing worries and fear, start discussing the issues.

What can the organization do?

Through their professional exchanges and interactions, the Ombudsmen have learned that it is much more effective to foster regular dialogue on performance rather than to concentrate on a performance appraisal system that requires an annual numerical rating of the supervisee. The dialogue may be complemented by an online narrative evaluation. Fre-

quent discussion, exchange of views and pointers for enhanced performance make it easy to complete the appraisal in a timely and relatively easy fashion. Supervisees would no longer see the appraisal as a punitive measure but rather as an instrument that holds no surprises, is realistic and allows for further training and development if necessary.

The Funds and Programmes may wish to consider introducing this kind of approach since it helps to create a collaborative rather than competitive

working environment. In the event of real conflict and disagreement over performance, a rebuttal system must be in place that gives supervisees a place to present their side of the story, both with regard to the rating and the content of the appraisal. The entire issue is then reviewed by a neutral panel. The resulting document should be placed on the official file of the supervisee. The Ombudsmen therefore recommend that the Funds and Programmes consider reviewing their existing performance rating systems to see whether they serve the organization well or not.

Clear reporting lines are a prerequisite for accountability. The Funds and Programmes should therefore make sure that each member of the workforce does in fact report to the officially designated

supervisor. In the case of multiple supervisors during a reporting period, management should ensure that clear instructions are given to and followed by all the supervisors to ensure that the supervisee is treated fairly by all parties.

The Funds and Programmes should require that expected deliverables be clearly defined and discussed at the beginning of the contract. Dialogue should continue throughout the year to address any new needs that may arise that would require different outcomes.

All contract holders have the right to a performance appraisal before they leave the organization. The Funds and Programmes should require all supervisors, as part of their own professional performance responsibilities, to finalize performance appraisals for all supervisees before they are separated from the organization or before they leave their function.

A mechanism should be established to ensure that an appraisal is done in the event of a supervisor or supervisee being reassigned, retiring or terminating under other circumstances. It is almost impossible to get this done after the fact, leaving the supervisee with a gap in his or her employment record.

What can the Ombudsman do?

The Office of the Ombudsman has adhered to its mandate of taking up performance-management issues only when all official avenues have been exhausted and not becoming involved in ongoing official organizational mechanisms. This has meant that the Office often becomes aware of a performance appraisal issue only once the process is completed and the document signed by both parties, who are not usually in agreement. In some cases, however, when the Ombudsmen have been made aware of conflict and serious lack of communication between the supervisor and the supervisee, especially with regard to performance evaluation, they have been able to work together with both parties to foster an atmosphere of open discussion of performance, laying the groundwork for the frequent, ongoing approach recommended above.

The Office of the Ombudsman team is also able to discuss with visitors how best to present their own evaluation of their performance. It is not always easy for some people to record their achievements in a positive, objective manner, preferring instead to understate their achievements lest they

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appear to be boasting. However, supervisees are often judged by their own accounts of their performance and if they appear lukewarm, it is very difficult for them to engage effectively in a rebuttal process later should the need arise. In similar manner, some supervisees find it very difficult not to react emotionally to a less-than-satisfactory appraisal and turn to the Office of the Ombudsman as a safe place to discuss their feelings and options. The Ombudsmen can help them to put personal feelings aside, see things objectively and respond professionally to a poor appraisal.

F. Mental and occupational health in the workplace

The issue

Mental health issues now account for almost half of all ill health among United Nations staff. As with any category of illness, mental health disorders vary widely in severity and chronicity, but if left unrecognized and untreated, can have a profound and debilitating impact on a person's career. In this regard and based on discussions with relevant services and with visitors to the Office, the Ombudsmen have learned that many staff do not receive timely diagnosis and treatment. The United Nations Medical Services are addressing this situation and the Ombudsmen understand that improvements in health care are planned that will culminate in a more efficient occupational health care agenda. In addition, a move is envisaged to a risk-stratified approach that will focus on staff with intrinsic health risks and on positions and duty stations where staff health is placed at higher risk. Clearly, the United Nations needs to act. Organizations that have invested in tackling ill health early are seeing a good return on investment, suggesting a strong business case for their actions. For the United Nations, the return on investment in targeting treatment will enable the Organization to be more proactive about early intervention and preventive measures. The Funds and Programmes will need to work together with the United Nations Medical Services and other partners in a system-wide approach to addressing mental health care in the United Nations workplace.

In the modern workplace, levels of stress have been on the increase for a number of years. Factors that have a direct impact in this domain include

increased levels of complexity, continuous demands on reviewing business processes for efficiency gains resulting in reorganization, downsizing, contractual change or separation from service, all of which can have a profound effect on anyone who works in an organization. The Ombudsmen have addressed many cases in the Funds and Programmes where these factors come into play: visitors have reported extreme levels of stress, resulting in feelings of depression, physical exhaustion, mental fatigue and destabilization. Often, a situation that is in itself life-changing and affects mental well-being – loss of job, change of contract, for example – is exacerbated by the lack of awareness of both employers and employees in dealing with people suffering from various forms of distress. In these scenarios, it is quite possible to make a wrong decision, one with which one often has to live for the rest of one's life.

The Ombudsmen have had many interactions with stakeholders involved in addressing stress in the workplace and efforts to seek solutions have often been uncoordinated. As a result, the Ombudsmen firmly believe that positive results can be achieved only through a joint, coordinated and comprehensive strategy for occupational health management, proactively supported by senior management. It is essential that the organizations accept the responsibility of taking measures to safeguard mental health rather than regarding it as a problem to be dealt with solely by the individual. Rather than focusing on intervention when the damage is done, the strategic objective has to be to keep people healthy and to dedicate resources to that goal. In addition, the current trend of categorizing the causes of ill mental health as purely medical in nature (“medicalizing” them) must be turned around. This can be done by actively involving managers in exercising a corporate duty of care. Equally important, managers must be trained to assume their role in addressing the needs of affected staff and coordinating with human resources departments and the Medical Services in situations where professional medical support is required.

The Funds and Programmes will need to work together with the United Nations Medical Services and other partners in a system-wide approach to addressing mental health care in the United Nations workplace.

It is essential that the organizations accept the responsibility of taking measures to safeguard mental health rather than regarding it as a problem to be dealt with solely by the individual.

There is, however, an apparent reluctance to assume such responsibility. This is partly due to the absence of know-how and lack of experience. An additional reason may be related to the financial consequences of dealing with mental-health issues, which are borne by central resources, while costs for medical treatment after the damage has occurred

are not covered by central resources but by independent insurance companies.

What can the organization do?

In order to bring about the required corporate change, the Ombudsmen have identified several areas for action:

- a) **Training.** It is essential that all those who deal with staff undergoing stressful situations be able to recognize warning signs and know how to refer staff to the appropriate professional services. As part of this effort, there should be dedicated training manuals for managers on how to deal with staff suffering from different forms of stress;
- b) **Communication.** In the kind of scenarios that can easily undermine a person's ability to function effectively, it is critical that communication be open and courteous. The Ombudsmen have observed that this is often not the case. Too frequently, there is a dearth of information and the person facing uncertainty resorts to speculation, which in turn leads to feelings of abandonment and anguish (commonly reported to the Ombudsmen). Interaction with the organization begins to resemble warfare and visitors speak of losing the battle, overpowered by the strength of the organization;
- 3) **Prevention.** Once the organization accepts responsibility for ensuring an environment conducive to mental well-being, it is easier to put best practice in place. When the organization is moving to separate a staff member, for example, utmost care must be taken to explain the different

options clearly. This is not a matter simply of referring the person affected to the relevant sections of the human resources manual on a website or sending a form letter bearing the devastating news. Everyone has a shared responsibility in this process, from the administration that takes the decision to abolish a post, for instance, to the direct supervisor and the head of the professional unit. In particular, when the organization has to take the decision to separate a long-serving staff member with a record of good service, care should be taken in the process to recognize the contribution of the staff member and ensure that the act of leaving the organization is accorded a certain dignity. The number of visitors whose morale and emotional state have been adversely affected shows that the human touch is often lacking in these situations;

- 4) **Identification.** When it becomes clear that a staff member needs help with a mental-health issue (whether caused by adverse work conditions or not), it is important to deal with the issue from a medical standpoint. However, it is equally important not to rush to "medicalize" the cause of the problem. To try to head off a medical emergency and resolve the issue at hand, steps should be taken to assess the total work environment in situations where there are indicators of potential problems that could lead to the need for medical intervention. This will require the kind of training recommended above and a commitment from the organizations to act swiftly and impartially to redress the situation. In addition, the organizations should take the time and care to assist and support staff that do have mental-health issues rather than seeking a way to separate the staff members and relinquish responsibility.

What can the Ombudsman do?

As agents of change, the Ombudsmen look forward to broadening collaboration on mental-health issues in the dialogue that they have initiated on a number of fronts to improve the management of conflict in the organizations that they serve. The time has passed when the only approach was to deal with staff on a case-by-case basis. The time has come for all actors to recognize the common causes of mental ill health in the work place and assume the responsibility of an institutional approach to addressing them.

Mediation in informal conflict resolution in the United Nations workplace

Background

As a component of informal conflict resolution in the United Nations global workplace, mediation is a particularly suitable option since the concept itself is widely and fairly uniformly accepted by people from different cultures and backgrounds. Those who work for the United Nations are well aware of the Organization's role as mediator in the most intractable situations throughout the world. In paragraph 15 of its resolution 61/261 on the administration of justice at the United Nations, the General Assembly affirmed mediation "as an important component of an effective and efficient informal system of administration of justice that should be available to any party to the conflict at any time before a matter proceeds to final judgement". This has been readily embraced by the workforce.

In helping to resolve a dispute, mediation offers a number of advantages: it is quick and avoids the often costly and time-consuming process of having recourse to the formal system (notably, judges at the Dispute Tribunal have the option of mandating mediation in cases before them when they believe that mediation can bring about an effective resolution); it provides a necessary, safe place where both parties, through the impartial, facilitating role of the mediator, are able to discuss positions and options openly and have an opportunity to see the perspective of the other party and understand the impact of their actions on each other; it can result in resolutions that both parties own and that are creative in a way that may otherwise not be possible; and its process remains confidential and can provide a face-saving solution.

In the same way that an ombudsman cannot be an advocate for either party in a dispute, a mediator remains impartial and does not control the outcome of mediation. The outcome will always remain in

the hands of the parties themselves. This approach provides an opportunity to bring a human face to conflict and is consistent with the motto of the Office of the Ombudsman "working together to find solutions". It is important to bear in mind that a mediator should be a trained professional with the knowledge and experience in this specialized field to act as a neutral third party. The process in this sense depends heavily on the skill of the mediator, who will be able to keep the parties in charge of their own exchanges and keep them engaged and involved. An important component of a professionally facilitated mediation is the settlement agreement that both parties, and only the parties, sign when agreement has been reached. Without strict adherence to accepted professional mediation standards, an agreement can easily unravel later, creating a truly intractable situation.

The members of the United Nations workforce can, of course, use many of the advantageous techniques of mediation in their daily work without waiting until a mediation session takes place. Some of the Funds and Programmes have provided seminars, workshops and training modules on the elements of mediation, such as effective listening skills, understanding other perspectives and maintaining respect for others. These efforts are very important in the landscape of conflict management and resolution since they can show how the willingness simply to engage in open dialogue with the other party is a huge step in the direction of resolving differences. Participation in conflict management skills

Without strict adherence to accepted professional mediation standards, an agreement can easily unravel later, creating a truly intractable situation.

can show all stakeholders how much can be achieved once the decision has been taken to give all parties the chance to speak, to listen and to be heard. This does not mean that the Office of the Ombudsman believes that anyone who has acquired these basic skills can facilitate a mediation session or that the need for qualified mediators of the kind described above will fade. It does mean that the chances of early resolution of a conflict increase when all the members of the workforce – staff and management alike – understand the full potential of the elements of mediation and how to apply them as quickly as possible when a conflict arises. The Office will continue to strive to find ways in which it can help this to become the norm in the Funds and Programmes.

The role of the Office of the Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman is increasingly drawing on the potential of mediation not only because of the expertise of the team but also because visitors, both staff and management, themselves request mediation. The Ombudsmen have seen that when parties agree to try mediation, they are very often already on the road to finding a solution. For example, when there is a dispute about performance, the parties may have come to realize that their own one-on-one conversations have not advanced them towards a mutually acceptable position. In asking for mediation, they have understood that the presence of a third, neutral party can provide for a safe space and can help them to crystallize their own thoughts, make them open to listening to the other side of the story and move to closure. By way of example, the Ombudsmen have witnessed, as mediators, that both parties can learn some enlightening aspects of their own perception of how the other party thinks, which can bring greater respect and understanding and ease the way to reconciliation and progress. The supervisor may see how her or his remarks, perhaps intended as encouragement, have been misinterpreted and the supervisee may understand the pressures facing the supervisor that had previously not been taken into account. This is especially true when both parties have some degree of management responsibilities and they are able to recognize the challenges and constraints under which the other party is operating. Whatever the scenario (and the Office has mediated in cases where peers have had strong disagreement),

a successful mediation can have extraordinary power to lay the basis for strengthened, positive cooperation and can change the climate of the workplace for the better.

The use of mediation in conflict resolution does not work in every case. There are situations that might require a judgement to clarify the interpretation of certain regulations and rules and their application so that justice prevails. In this context, it is extremely important to remember that if the regulations and rules are not clearly understood by all parties concerned – including the mediator – the risk is that any informal resolution will not be based on sound premises. In other cases, problems have been allowed to fester over years and have escalated to such a point that informal conflict resolution seems no longer possible. When consulted in such instances, the Ombudsmen believe that an appeal to the ethical standards expected in the international civil services may help parties to understand that it is in the interests of the United Nations and in their own interests to make every attempt to engage in open discussion in the non-threatening environment provided either by a mediator or an ombudsman. In dealing with longstanding conflicts, the Ombudsmen have noted that the sense of vocation to international service and dedication to United Nations ideals have sometimes been badly eroded. Nevertheless, the Ombudsmen have found that with a patient approach, accompanied by coaching, it is possible, for example, to move to mediation or to reach an equitable solution in cases with a history of confrontation and conflict stretching back many years before being brought to the attention of the Office of the Ombudsman.

The role of the organization

In their ongoing efforts to transform the organizational culture to one in which conflict can be effectively addresses and managed, the Funds and Programmes might wish to consider the following factors that have been shown to be instrumental for successful informal conflict and problem resolution, particularly with regard to mediation.

1. Corporate support

The potential for informal conflict resolution is embedded in organizational culture. Corporate support that encourages both informal conflict resolution and a mediation culture significantly

increases the readiness of management and staff at large to engage in informal conflict resolution processes. This is not a given in organizational cultures that are still too often too hierarchical and do not lend themselves to collaborative processes such as mediation, which flatten those structures.

2. *Early engagement*

The longer a conflict remains unaddressed, the more difficult it becomes to resolve it informally. A wide-spread avoidance culture in the workplace and large diversity in cultural approaches to conflict management in a globally operating organization pose challenges to early engagement in conflict situations. The Office of the Ombudsman provides a safe place to address some of those challenges to empower colleagues to feel comfortable to address conflict early and thus contribute to higher potential for an early resolution.

3. *Collaborative practice*

Fight or flight reactions are common in conflict situations. Collaborative practice provides a more promising alternative. Collaborative practice invites active listening, separation of the

problem from the person and the identification of underlying interests and needs.

4. *Power balance*

Work environments tend to be prone to huge power imbalances, including strong hierarchies. Informal conflict resolution, including mediation, has limited to no potential in situations of significant power imbalances between the parties. A mediator may be in a position to successfully address those imbalances since mediation is in effect an invitation to cut through hierarchies and organigrammes and seek a space for collaborative dialogue without regard for grades and positions. The mediator provides that space, where the parties feel protected and bring a positive tone to facilitate a solution in a face-saving way.

5. *Appreciative inquiry/ self-awareness*

Informal conflict resolution tools, in particular mediation, are underpinned by the readiness of the parties to take a step back and to reflect on their positions and behaviours, and an attempt to see the other party's needs and interests through active listening.

Looking ahead

Online dispute mechanisms will not only allow more accessibility but will also facilitate an increased focus on identifying patterns of disputes and thus enhance dispute-management efforts on a system-wide basis.

The experience gained over the last 10 years is extremely valuable in charting the course of operations for the next decade of the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes. In fact, the history of informal conflict resolution in the Funds and Programmes stretches back as far as the 1980s, to the Ombudsman Panel, the precursor of the present Office. A lot has been

learned in that time about effective informal conflict resolution in global organizations that employ 85 per cent of their staff in the country offices. In the early days, it was difficult to respond quickly to staff members reporting grievances from the country offices: surface mail took a long time, international telephone calls were expensive and there was no travel budget for the volunteers who were members of the Ombudsman

Panel. If one of the members went on mission, it would be possible to address grievances in the offices visited; otherwise, staff members away from headquarters had to endure a long wait for assistance in addressing their grievances.

Things changed dramatically with the establishment of the Office on a fully funded, independent basis in 2002: it became possible for an ombudsman to travel to country offices to address grievances and to raise awareness of the services of the Office. Even more dramatic were the possibilities of rapid communication offered by the World Wide Web. With the evolution of a multitude of web-based tools,

including telephonic communication, remote-conferencing software and videoconferencing mechanisms, finding solutions to workplace disputes has become increasingly virtual in nature.

In the experience of the Office, the use of technology has not hampered the quality, frequency and effectiveness of virtual interventions. Indeed, the use of technology has been a practical and cost-effective option allowing for immediate attention and easier accessibility to employees who are facing difficult situations in the workplace. The Office looks forward to reviewing with its users and stakeholders the potential of online dispute-resolution tools. The Office also plans to maximize the use of the appropriate technology to prepare the workforce of the Funds and Programmes to address conflict early and competently. It is envisaged that more webinars will be arranged with the objective of training and maintaining dialogue on workplace conflict issues. Online dispute mechanisms will not only allow more accessibility but will also facilitate an increased focus on identifying patterns of disputes and thus enhance dispute-management efforts on a system-wide basis. An important goal of the Office is not only to continue to be effective in its intervention in the workplace but also to build up conflict management competence within the organizations that will help to support dispute prevention efforts undertaken by other stakeholders.

Building on the pilot phases of an electronic, confidential questionnaire sent to visitors to gauge their experience with the Office of the Ombudsman and to provide feedback for continuing improvement, the Office will introduce the questionnaire on a fully operational basis in 2013. The results will be included in the next annual report

The Office of the Ombudsman will strengthen its efforts to sensitize all stakeholders to the impor-

tance of building comprehensive conflict management systems. This will include regular joint meetings of conflict management stakeholders and support to the process by providing expertise available from organizations operating conflict management systems.

The Ombudsmen thus see the future of informal-conflict management in the Funds and Programmes as an increasingly participatory process in which they will be able to provide the professional expertise to empower all staff to deal with conflict

efficiently. Of course, there will always be occasions when the intervention of the Ombudsmen in person will be the most effective measure to deal with individual conflicts. The Ombudsman will continue to fulfil their role as early-warning monitors of shifts in the workplace climate and as agents of change for the Funds and Programmes. For all members of the workforce wishing to explore their options in a confidential setting, the Office will always offer a safe haven, one that will be increasingly accessible thanks to technological innovations.

Recommendations

Conflict management systems

1. For conflict management systems to be successful, the expressed commitment from senior management is essential at an early stage. In addition to management support, a long-term strategy needs to be developed and the associated budget approved to undertake successfully the tasks and objectives relating to conflict management. This must build on a corporate understanding of the financial, human and reputational risks of badly managed conflict.

Career and talent management

2. It is important for all organizations to remember that the workforce is their greatest asset and to take into account the human dimension when embarking on new initiatives; they should avoid giving even the impression of regarding staff as a liability. In the experience of the Ombudsmen, when staff members are regarded as a liability, they can easily become one with resulting conflict, even law suits. It is also important for the organizations to remember that when staff feel badly treated, the word spreads quickly and causes reputational damage.

Restructuring and organizational change

3. In devising long-term vision and strategy supported by a robust communication strategy in a restructuring process, the Funds and Programmes should not only communicate the rationale for change but also the ways in which change is going to be implemented. This should include options that will be available to staff who are unsuccessful in obtaining posts during the restructuring and notifications to staff whose posts have changed owing to budgetary considerations.

4. The organizations should try to minimize the ad hoc characteristics that seem to have become a part of change and restructuring efforts. Action to address this should be coordinated by headquarters or through the regional divisions and bureaux.
5. It is important that the organizations develop an inventory of available skills before entering into a restructuring exercise. Management should analyse the skills that the current workforce possesses before deciding to search externally for other candidates. This kind of planning would help to give an idea of where the skills deficiencies lie.

Job and career issues

6. The Administration should improve the quality and frequency of its feedback, especially in situations where, following the abolition of a post, staff are engaged in seeking other opportunities and have requested feedback that could better position them in their job search. In the experience of the Ombudsmen, such a difficult process can be successfully implemented only if there is a culture of engagement within the organization. The organization should make it a priority to provide feedback to its staff despite the limitations it may be working under. Using the Office of the Ombudsman to fulfil the task of communicating reasons why an administrative decision has been made, for example, is not a correct use of the ombudsman function.
7. The Funds and Programmes should maintain the principles of transparency in recruitment, especially when the Administration decides that a desk-review or a strategic placement is in

the best interests of the organization. In addition, the Funds and Programmes should increase the frequency of monitoring staff that have been recruited following such a process.

8. The organizations should make efforts not only to ensure that all staff have been given an induction to the organization but also that the quality of the induction allows the staff to have an informed opinion of the practices and culture of the workplace. In order to sustain the momentum introduced during the induction programmes, the Funds and Programmes should introduce mentoring programmes or reinforce those in existence to promote an effective work environment and to provide career guidance and assistance to staff that have been affected by restructuring.
9. While in general the Funds and Programmes encourage staff mobility (with the caveats noted earlier in the present report), it is essential that in succession planning exercises, the Administration include staff on secondment as well as those on special leave in the inventory of skills.

Abrasive behaviour in the workplace

10. Abrasive behaviour can cause extreme suffering in the workplace. It is essential that the Funds and Programmes acknowledge that this type of behaviour exists and is disruptive to the organization's mandate, results and reputation. They should therefore carefully analyse its underlying causes and take action to assist the parties involved. They should help abrasive individuals to understand the implications of their behaviour instead of ignoring it or personalizing the problem. In dealing with abrasive behaviour, the element of perception is critical. While perception is by its nature subjective and not always a reflection of reality, it can in fact become reality, as anyone subjected to perceived abrasive behaviour can attest. The analysis of what has led to abrasive behaviour in the workplace should therefore focus as much on understanding the perception as on gathering facts.

11. Senior management should demonstrate that abrasive behaviour will not be tolerated. Self-management skills and emotional intelligence should be considered as core competencies to be systematically assessed at entry level. Those in leadership positions should be recruited for their leadership qualities as well as for their technical skills. Leadership qualities should include interpersonal competence and skills in self-management and emotional intelligence and those recruited in these positions should be prepared to demonstrate role-model qualities that can be emulated by all.
12. Senior management should remind supervisors that they are accountable for the overall efficiency and effectiveness of their teams and that through their leadership they bear the responsibility of establishing and maintaining a productive, harmonious work environment consistent with the ethics of the United Nations. The effective management of human resources is not the sole responsibility of human resource offices – all supervisors have an essential role to play in this function.
13. The Funds and Programmes may wish to invest in leadership coaching experts to improve the quality of leadership of those already in managerial positions. In the experience of the Ombudsmen, such qualities will not be harnessed solely through routine training exercises on communication or team work. An individualized, tailored approach is usually required for noticeable behavioural change to take place.

Mental and occupational health in the workplace

14. In order to bring about the required corporate change, the Ombudsmen have identified several areas for action:
 - a) **Training.** It is essential that all those who deal with staff undergoing stressful situations be able to recognize warning signs and know how to refer staff to the appropriate professional services. As part of this effort, there should be dedicated training manuals for managers on how to deal with staff suffering from different forms of stress;

- b) **Communication.** In the kind of scenarios that can easily undermine a person's ability to function effectively, it is critical that communication be open and courteous. The Ombudsmen have observed that this is often not the case. Too frequently, there is a dearth of information and the person facing uncertainty resorts to speculation, which in turn leads to feelings of abandonment and anguish (commonly reported to the Ombudsmen). Interaction with the organization begins to resemble warfare and visitors speak of losing the battle, overpowered by the strength of the organization;
- c) **Prevention.** Once the organization accepts responsibility for ensuring an environment conducive to mental well-being, it is easier to put best practice in place. When the organization is moving to separate a staff member, for example, utmost care must be taken to explain the different options clearly. This is not a matter simply of referring the person affected to the relevant sections of the human resources manual on a website or sending a form letter bearing the devastating news. Everyone has a shared responsibility in this process, from the administration that takes the decision to abolish a post, for instance, to the direct supervisor and the head of the professional unit. In particular, when the organization has to take the decision to separate a

long-serving staff member with a record of good service, care should be taken in the process to recognize the contribution of the staff member and ensure that the act of leaving the organization is accorded a certain dignity. The number of visitors whose morale and emotional state have been adversely affected shows that the human touch is often lacking in these situations;

- c) **Identification.** When it becomes clear that a staff member needs help with a mental-health issue (whether caused by adverse work conditions or not), it is important to deal with the issue from a medical standpoint. However, it is equally important not to rush to "medicalize" the cause of the problem. To try to head off a medical emergency and resolve the issue at hand, steps should be taken to assess the total work environment in situations where there are indicators of potential problems that could lead to the need for medical intervention. This will require the kind of training recommended above and a commitment from the organizations to act swiftly and impartially to redress the situation. In addition, the organizations should take the time and care to assist and support staff that do have mental-health issues rather than seeking a way to separate the staff members and relinquish responsibility.

Voices

"The first thing I remembered this morning was that I had not sent this email. Just to say thank you for taking the time to coach me on Monday – much appreciated."

"Thank you so much for talking with me this morning. I appreciate your laying out the issues for me. This was very useful and I will think about how to raise the issue with my supervisor here. Thank you again for taking the time to talk to me and for advising me."

"I'm sending you this email just to give you my regards and to thank you so much for your kind assistance and support while solving my issue. Furthermore, after my return everything has been settled down with me and my family and that of course is because of your support."

"Thanking you for all your motivation and support to me over the last 3 months."

"Je tiens à vous remercier infiniment pour la promptitude avec laquelle vous avez réagi à cette demande. Tout échange de correspondance vous sera transmis, pour vous permettre de mieux comprendre ma situation. Merci infiniment de votre appui."

"Hearing from you was most encouraging and most appreciated."

"The Staff Association would like to thank you sincerely for offering to mediate on our behalf. Your assurance has given us relief and hope. Find attached a briefing on events and actions taken to date after devaluations were effected in the country."

"We can't thank you enough for collaborating with us on this issue to bring about a positive outcome."

"I'm sending you this email just to give you my regards and to thank you so much for your kind assistance and support while solving my issue."

"I am very relieved! So I can close this chapter. And I have recommended the Ombudsman to two colleagues now."

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you very much indeed for taking the time from your busy schedule to sit with me and discuss my predicament and talk with all the people involved. As you know, I was going through a rough period but you helped me enormously. I find it very gratifying that a woman in such a busy and responsible position could take time out to discuss my problems!"

"Soon I will be leaving the UN but I will never forget what you did and your office, too. Again, thank you for everything you did for me."

"I am writing this email to express my appreciation with how you have dealt with me when I was having problems. Although I am not having any foreseeable problems now, I would just like express my gratitude just the same."

"Te quiero agradecer por tu paciencia y espíritu colaborativo que permitió que colegas se acercarán y pudieran expresar sus inquietudes."

"Estoy muy contenta que gracias a su mediación lograremos uno, ser felices en nuestro trabajo y dos, estar dispuestos a "walk the extra mile"

"You all have been so supportive and so helpful; you have been a real lifeline ... I wanted to thank you all very warmly and sincerely for everything."

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/suspicious 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

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

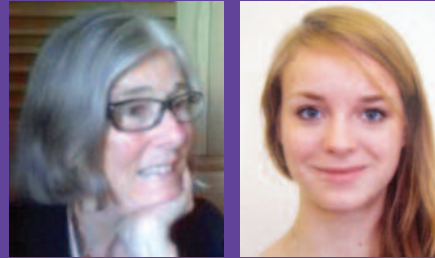
5h. **Investigative/Disciplinary Processes:** fairness/duration/ adherence to rules and regulations during investigations and or/disciplinary measures.

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 Physical Environment**
- 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**

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. Susann Nowack, Mr. Eskandar Rastegar, Ms. Judit Revesz and Ms. Linda Schieber.



Top – left to right: Linda Schieber and Susann Nowack

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



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

**Office of the Ombudsman for
United Nations Funds and Programmes**

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