

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

1 January - 31 December 2013



**Working together to find solutions**





# Contents

---

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>I. Overview of the work of the Office from 1 January to 31 December 2013</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>A. Overview of cases</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>B. Outreach activities</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>II. Observations and recommendations concerning the major causes of conflict in the workplace reported to the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>A. Change and its implications</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>B. Career management</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>C. Staff-management relations</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>D. Feedback culture and self-management</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>E. Fairness, trust, leadership and inclusiveness</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>F. Potential of informal conflict resolution, including mediation</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>G. Conflict management and organizational culture</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>III. Added value of the Office of the Ombudsman Evaluation</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>IV. Networking and professional development</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>V. Looking ahead</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>Annexes</b>	
Annex 1. Recommendations.....	26
Annex 2. Voices .....	29
Annex 3. Issue definitions .....	30



# Introduction

---

The Office of the Ombudsman is mandated to address conflict informally within the five funds and programmes that it serves by providing an independent, confidential safe space to discuss problems in the workplace and to surface underlying systemic issues. In doing so, the Ombudsmen uphold the principles of confidentiality, impartiality/neutrality, independence and informality.

The annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman serves as a tool to illustrate issues brought to the attention of the Ombudsmen and provides an overview of the issues raised during the reporting period and the related implications for the organization. The Ombudsmen offer an analysis of underlying systemic issues that could help to reduce future dysfunctional conflict and potential efficiency losses and they also propose tools and techniques to improve conflict management. The report also helps to hold the administration account-

able for the policies ratified by the organizations, especially concerning workplace relationships.

The Office of the Ombudsman provides recommendations on actions that the organization can take to address the various problem areas. The annual reports are an invitation for dialogue on these various topics. The Ombudsmen invite everyone in the organization to participate in this dialogue, which also includes providing feedback to the Office of the Ombudsman on its work and on the recommendations provided.

The Executive Heads of the funds and programmes covered by the Office of the Ombudsman

have circulated previous reports widely on issuance and have at the same time seized the opportunity to restate the critical importance of excellence in people management, of constructive conflict management with a human face and of continued strengthening of engaging work environments. The Office of the Ombudsman strongly recommends maintaining this practice as it underscores organizational commitment, pro-active conflict management, and the recognition of staff members as the most important and valuable asset in the organization. At the same time, the Ombudsmen would like to emphasize the vital importance of regular, face-to-face meetings between the Executive Heads of the funds and programmes and the Ombudsmen, in accordance with the terms of reference of the Office. It is only through these meetings that the Ombudsmen can provide, from their unique, privileged perspective, a current picture of trends within the organizations and serve as an early-warning system that can help to restore a harmonious, productive workplace. Such dialogue with the Executive Heads should be a mutual one.

In the 10 years of reporting on workplace issues, it is not surprising that the use of the annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman has evolved. When the Office started in 2002, it replaced the Ombudsman Panel, which was composed of volunteers and was bound by the statutory rules then in force for the organizations it served. The first annual report therefore highlighted the role of the ombudsman and how it differed from the voluntary mechanism. As the years have progressed, the annual report has evolved into a barometer of the workplace climate of the funds and programmes to which it provides services and an authoritative guideline with specific recommendations on how workplace conditions can be ameliorated. It is therefore important to emphasize that the purpose of the report is not to place blame but rather to serve as an invitation to embrace con-

The Ombudsmen offer an analysis of underlying systemic issues that could help to reduce future dysfunctional conflict and potential efficiency losses.

flict and problems as opportunities to review ways of doing business and to develop options for improvement. In this regard, there is a strong need to establish an accountability framework within the organizations and make individuals accountable for the recurring actions and behaviours that negatively impact the organizations.

Lower funding levels, uncertain times and the continuous need for change and adaptation in management and business processes were at the core of the organizational context in 2013. The present report focuses on the implications for organizations and highlights critical success factors for managing change and restructuring. These factors include effective participation, transparency and collaboration, which will in turn enable and advance an environment of inclusive excellence and diversity in all the organizations served.

The report also provides reflections on the importance of pro-active career management and addresses the implications of short-term contracts and their related risks in securing an effective, inclusive future workforce. It highlights the importance of transparent recruitment procedures that use competency assessments and include strong self-management and self-awareness assessments. The Office of the Ombudsman continues to observe a dramatic absence of emotional intelligence, which continues to undermine faith and trust levels and limits the ability to develop open communication cultures. The results are environments in which colleagues fear to speak up and suffer from health disorders, and where abusive behaviour is not addressed. The report provides practical steps to assist everyone to contribute to building fairness in the workplace, to develop effective feedback cultures and to strengthen trust levels in the organization.

Constructive, empowering staff-management relations are an important building block for collaborative approaches and open and participatory relationships and are thus instrumental for successful change management. The report describes some dynamics at play and gives suggestions to strengthen staff-management relations.

Mediation is increasingly and successfully used as the tool of choice for informal conflict resolution. The report describes the potential of mediation and includes feedback from colleagues who have made use of mediation.

Conflict management is everybody's responsibility and the Office of the Ombudsman has taken an active role in promoting conflict-management systems that strengthen collaboration between key stakeholders.

The Ombudsmen spend several months during the year meeting colleagues in the field, promoting the use of the Office and building capacity in conflict management.

The report provides details on these activities and describes projects and partnerships to strengthen capacity-building for conflict management. The Office of the Ombudsman has observed that while some good initiatives have been developed within the organizations, they are still to be effectively implemented. Actions are not taken to implement these initiatives or strategies often owing to lack of commitment from senior management.

“What is the added value of the Office of the Ombudsman?” is a valid question and one that becomes increasingly important in times of change and shortage of funds. The report illustrates the wide range of activities of the Office of the Ombudsman that have an immediate influence on business strategy, engagement levels and on the organization's financial bottom line.

Finally, the report also includes a chapter on future projects and challenges ahead. Some of the future projects include the development of the role of the Office of the Ombudsman as a business partner, the fostering of partnerships with academia, NGOs and the corporate sector. These projects will promote the exchange of experiences in conflict management and promote capacity-building, the further exploration of online dispute resolution opportunities and the development of a transition strategy for the next Ombudsman team after 2015.

Conflict management is everybody's responsibility.

# Overview of the work of the Office from 1 January to 31 December 2013

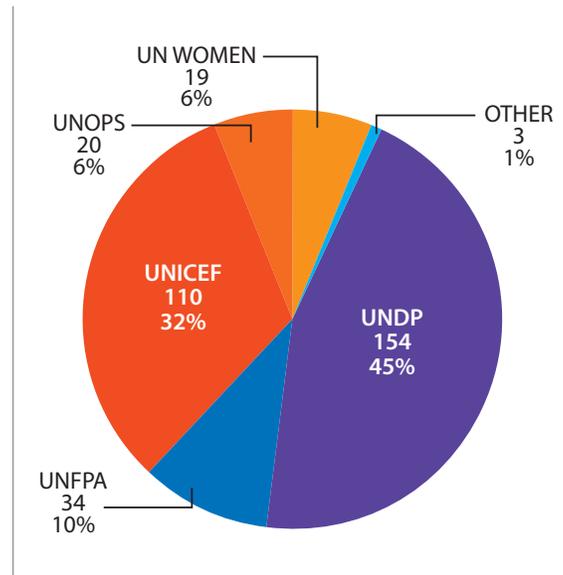
## A. Overview of cases

The Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes dealt with a total of 340 cases in the period under review. Figure 1 shows a breakdown of the numbers of cases by organization.

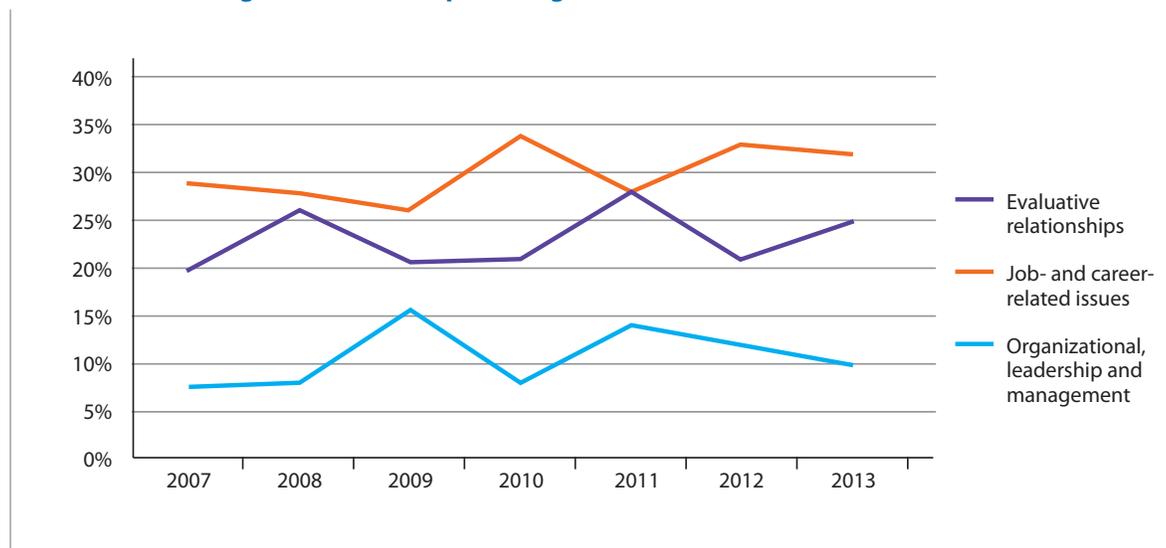
The three main issues that the Office of the Ombudsman addressed are (a) job- and career-related issues, (b) evaluative relationships and (c) organizational, leadership and management issues. These have been the three main issues that the Ombudsmen have reported on in the last seven years. Despite various efforts to address them, these three issues continue to be the main cause of conflict in the funds and programmes workplace. Figure 2 shows the trend that the three main issues have over a seven-year period.

The average duration of a case in 2013 was 43 days with most cases presenting two or more issues.

**Figure 1. Cases received from 1 January to 31 December 2013**



**Figure 2. Evaluative relationship, job- and career-related and organizational, leadership and management issues as percentages of all cases received, 2007 to 2013**



One issue often requires multi-level involvement of other stakeholders such as human resources, senior management and administrative specialists. The issues that are brought in person to the Office often result in conflict coaching and assisting the contract holder to draw options that may help to resolve conflict. Issues that cause conflict are also addressed remotely with most of the interaction and communication taking place over the phone or internet communication tools. Figure 3 shows a breakdown of cases that the Office received at

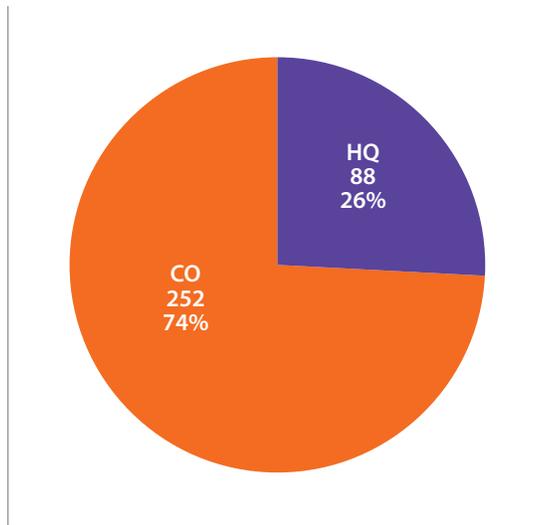
headquarters and those received from country offices whereas figure 4 illustrates the breakdown of cases per issue in 2013.

### B. Outreach activities

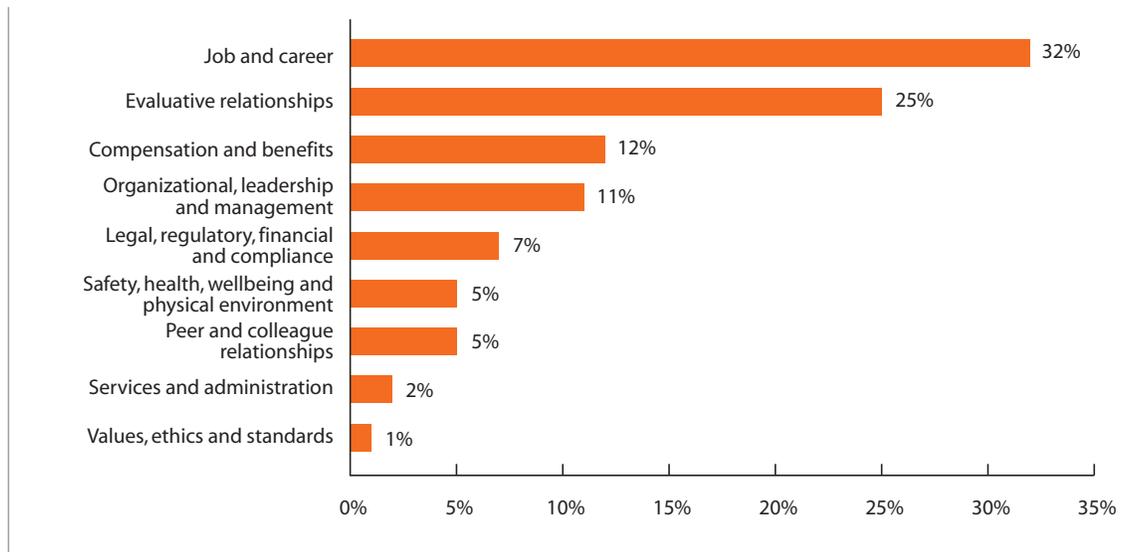
During the reporting period, the Ombudsmen visited a total of eight countries in five regions. In addition to helping to induct new Resident Representatives, the Office made presentations on informal conflict resolution to Junior Professional Officers, newly recruited staff and United Nations volunteers. The Office was also requested by senior management, human resources and staff associations to give presentations on particular aspects of conflict resolution. The topics covered included conflict dynamics, negotiation, mediation and communication skills and other mechanisms used by the Office to help to resolve conflict informally.

The Office had extensive contact with management and staff in 2013. Meetings were held with various stakeholders to build awareness of the role the Office plays and to highlight the benefits of early intervention when addressing conflicts informally. Meetings with stakeholders such as the Ethics Office and the Office for Audit and Investigation, for example, were particularly helpful in ensuring that cases were processed in the most appropriate way, either informally through the Office of the Ombudsman or formally through the

**Figure 3. All cases, country offices vs. headquarters, 2013**



**Figure 4. Overview of all issues in 2013 by percentage**



Ethics Office or the office for Audit and Investigation. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality that applies to each of the offices, information was shared in an attempt to establish a coordinated, supportive response to workplace grievances, especially where there are multiple actors involved.

To facilitate further outreach, the Office of the Ombudsman will revamp its website. The information that is currently available on the internet site does not adequately reflect and inform the staff of the funds and programme of the services offered by the Office of the Ombudsman. While staff and

contract holders of the funds and programmes do have access to information on the Office of the Ombudsman for the Funds and Programmes through the respective intranet web pages, an internet presence is required in order to adequately inform all personnel serviced by the Office.

The Ombudsmen were invited to participate in and make a presentation at the Conflict Competency Week at the African Development Bank. This was an opportunity to share expertise and skills in a week-long training programme for senior executives at the African Development Bank.

# 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. Change and its implications

It is often said that the only thing that is constant is change. The predictability of change in the workplace, however, is not an indication that individuals or the organization are better prepared for change and its implications. Periods of change are usually an opportunity for the organization to reposition and strengthen its strategy. As was mentioned in the 2012 report of the Office of the Ombudsman, restructuring is also an opportunity to undertake the inventory of skills available within the organization and identify those that are required. The organization should take advantage of this period to build its staff and then the staff will build the business of the organization.

Periods of change should not be used to re-invent the wheel but to build on what has already been achieved. There are many indications in the funds and programmes of an inclusive, systematic approach to implementing change in the workplace. There are also indications that the administration in some organizations has made an effort to provide information on change processes in a transparent manner. The Office of the Ombudsman is encouraged by these efforts but reiterates the need for fully transparent communications regarding all aspects of corporate policies, especially those concerning organizational change. In managing change processes, some organizations have taken a proactively inclusive approach in their decision-making, which has resulted in a more effective change process. Nevertheless, the Office continues to receive visitors who are concerned about the process and the decision-making practices associated with change. These concerns rarely pertain to the need to change but

often refer to fairness and transparency of administrative practices associated with change.

In 2013, various restructuring processes were introduced in the funds and programmes that will be implemented within the next three to five years. A lot of material concerning the rationale for the change or restructuring process was shared with staff. The Office of the Ombudsman has observed that in the information circulated from, for example, reports of experts, human resources guidelines and executive messages, there is a tendency to use particular terminology and change-specific terms interchangeably; for instance: restructuring, re-profiling, change management, reviews and (re-)alignment. It is important to ensure that a common understanding of what those terms mean is reached between the administration and staff to avoid confusion and In addition, the Office has observed that in times of restructuring, what is referred to as “business interests” overrides policies that have already been put in place to address change in the organization. This usually results in arbitrariness and lack of accountability, which are major causes of workplace conflict.

The Office of the Ombudsman observes that in restructuring and change-management processes, the workplace is often rife with rhetoric and rumour. This is the case especially where tension already existed in an office prior to the restructuring

The predictability of change in the workplace, however, is not an indication that individuals or the organization are better prepared for change and its implications.

and where there is a lack of transparency. The Office has addressed concerns from staff who say that they heard from a colleague that: *“the abolition of my position was a mistake”, “the funding for the position is really available and the budget for the position exists”, “management is targeting me for the abolition of my post”*. Offices that are undergoing restructuring can limit the occurrence of rumour through open communication and transparency and should address rumour as soon as possible with honest clarification on misconceptions and misinterpretations.

A restructuring exercise often involves at the outset a job-matching exercise, where internal candidates may be matched against one of the new positions. Thereafter, job fairs take place, where internal and ultimately external candidates are given the space and opportunity to interview and apply for the new positions. During this process, expectations are raised as to which person will obtain a particular post and sometimes the element of institutional memory is highlighted as an important factor in management’s decision-making process. Either way, the likelihood that the posts will be filled with internal candidates is usually quite high. The Office of the Ombudsman has received complaints from staff who have been unsuccessful at obtaining positions in a job fair and the positions that they have applied for

are filled by candidates external to the organization. This has raised tensions in the workplace tremendously as it is often

understood by staff that external candidates are to be recruited only if no internal candidates are found to be suitable. This causes distrust to grow within the workplace because the organization does not take the time to explain why an external candidate is particularly suitable for the positions in the job fair.

Restructuring should be a participatory process. Staff representatives should be encouraged and invited to sit at the executive table when decisions are being made about how the restructuring is to take place. Staff have come to the Office of the Ombudsman claiming that there is a lack of proper, relevant and timely information when it comes to change management practices. They often feel that there is a tendency to withhold pertinent information instead of sharing it or that certain staff are privy to relevant information and others are not. In this context, the Office has observed that levels of

distrust and lack of communication are low in those organizations where there is a practice of actively and consistently making staff representation a part of the decision-making process in matters of change and restructuring. This proactive measure usually results in a better managed process where staff and management work collaboratively to find solutions in often difficult and challenging times of change.

### **Abolition of posts**

Restructuring often results in the abolition of positions and functions. The Office of the Ombudsman continues to receive cases where the abolition of a post coincides with the end of a contractual period and the affected staff member does not receive indemnities on the grounds that the contract has simply expired. The framing of a staff member’s separation simply as a non-renewal of contract rather than an abolition of post has significant cost-saving implications for the organizations. This is the case especially where there are long-serving staff members whose posts have been abolished and who have expectations that the time in service to the organization would be recognized by the organization. Associated with the expectations of indemnities is the interpretation of what is considered by the organization as a break in service. In most of the funds and programmes, a long-serving staff member is one who has been employed on a fixed-term contract for more than five years. The long-serving status is questioned when the staff member was contracted under a different type of contract, such as a contract for activities of limited duration, for example, for a certain period before obtaining a fixed-term contract.

The Staff Regulations and Rules indicate that in situations of restructuring and abolition of post, there is a hierarchy of retention of staff in the new structure. This usually means that staff who have permanent contracts are considered before those with any other type of contracts for the positions available. In such situations, there is often the perception that permanent contract holders will almost always retain the positions available during a job fair. The Office of the Ombudsman has observed, however, that this is not always the case. There are situations where qualified, suitable permanent contract holders do not get positions in the new structure and other contract holders do. This often leads to allegations of unfairness and requests for management evaluation.

Restructuring should be a participatory process.

The Office of the Ombudsman is encouraged by the efforts that have been put in place to communicate the administrative steps to follow after a position has been abolished. Long-serving staff who are on abolished posts usually receive a letter informing them of their rights and the relevant timelines that will affect the course of their continued employment. Staff in such situations are also informed of their job-search period and the resources available to support them in finding a job. In addition to providing timely information on the steps to be taken upon post abolition, it is important that human resources offices monitor the progress made by displaced staff in obtaining positions and ensure that staff can indeed take advantage of the resources available to them. The Office has addressed concerns by staff who find themselves in such situations and cannot take advantage of the job search facility. The reasons include the fact that it is difficult to obtain time from their soon-to-be-abolished duties or, if time is obtained, low connectivity to the internet, which prevents them from engaging in a robust, aggressive search. It is equally difficult to obtain reliable information about the practices and procedures since they are frequently updated but not adequately publicized.

Another factor to take into account is the choice of language of communication to staff. Often letters sent to displaced staff pertaining to their employment come from the regional offices as such processes are often centralized. It is not unusual for a letter to be sent to a displaced staff member in a language other than the one the staff member uses in day-to-day functions in the country office. Although the staff member may understand the language or may get help to interpret the contents of the letter, sending such an important letter in this way gives the wrong message and leaves the staff member feeling disrespected.

The Office of the Ombudsman recognizes and has observed the disappointing and discouraging situations where long-serving staff members who have been displaced for reasons of abolition of post cannot find positions. Some of these staff come to the Office after having applied to over 30 vacancies. Such staff are usually experienced and come with a long history of documented excellent performance and achievement. Efforts on the part of the organization have not led to any concrete result and the staff member is left contemplating a future with no

real hope of employment within the organization that he or she has been serving for over 20 years. It would be helpful if the organization could provide feedback to such staff members on their application process, including what are perceived as strong points and areas where attention is needed, and give insight on how the staff member can get shortlisted.

Often in situations of abolition of post, the staff member is told that though the functions that he or she was performing have been abolished; there would be future opportunities for them to support the office as a consultant or as an independent contractor. The office that was previously staffed by employees holding fixed-term contracts undergoes a restructuring where most of the positions are abolished with some of the functions left to be delivered by consultants. The credibility of the restructuring is often questioned and usually is a cause of much suspicion and conflict in the workplace. The perception is that the organization is not respecting its own rules by allocating core functions to consultancy arrangements, which are purposed for more temporary functions. Other perceptions of arbitrariness occur when a previously international position is re-classified as a national post. As the capacity in a country grows, the likelihood is quite high that more functions in a funds and programmes country office will be performed by national staff instead of international staff. In such cases, communication by leadership is a key element to dispel animosity and tension in the workplace.

Allegations of abuse of process are often accompanied by accusations of discrimination and bias when staff visit the Office of the Ombudsman with grievances pertaining to the abolition of a post. Staff allege favouritism and bias based on gender or ethnic grounds and question the way that the decision has been taken by the administration. Indeed, the Ombudsmen often hear from staff who believe that the abolition of the post is motivated by the improper use of a supervisor's position of authority and influence. The Ombudsmen would like to emphasize that

It is important that human resources offices monitor the progress made by displaced staff in obtaining positions and ensure that staff can indeed take advantage of the resources available to them.

an allegation of discrimination is extremely serious, particularly in the United Nations. In the experience of the Ombudsmen, staff are well aware that allegations of discrimination must not be made frivolously. When the allegations appear to be well founded, there needs to be a formal, due process to determine the severity and particular nature of discrimination. The Office of the Ombudsman does not have the mandate to conduct such formal processes. Nevertheless, in the Ombudsmen's experience, such situations rarely arise and can be mitigated where management enters into transparent and open communication about its decision-making. Management should address the perception of favouritism directly in its communications and provide information on mechanisms and encourage their use if there is any doubt as to whether the organization has adhered to ethical decision-making.

#### **What can the Organization do?**

The administration needs to ensure that terminology is clearly explained and used consistently throughout the organizations. Otherwise, the lack of consistent usage will lead to misinterpretation, misunderstanding and misperception in the process of implementing change. Policies introduced in times of restructuring should make reference to previous policies that dealt with the same subject matter and should highlight what provisions have been changed.

The organizations should put in place mechanisms to address promptly and transparently all queries and disputes that are a result of the change process. The Office of the Ombudsman is encouraged by some of the initiatives taken by some funds and programmes in creating web pages that are interactive and are facilitated by the administration. This encourages better communication and transparency. In a culture with low levels of trust, every effort should be made to communicate the steps in the change process clearly.

Career options and planning should be available to internal candidates affected by change management processes.

In cases where the post of a long-serving staff member is abolished and the organization does not renew the contract or allows it to expire, the organization should manage the expectations, rights and indemnities of the staff member concerned.

All support to displaced staff must be monitored for progress and quality. It is not enough to leave the process only up to the staff member. The organization must take steps to ensure that the staff member is in no way hindered from taking full advantage of the resources available in the job search. The organization must articulate to all staff the details of the exit strategy in place to mitigate the risk of losing qualified staff.

There needs to be close monitoring of the individual consultant modality. The organization must look closely at the implications for the quality of the work product when the terms and conditions of employment of those responsible for helping to achieve organizational objectives become less favourable, as is usually the case when a former staff member has to accept an individual contract agreement. Management should revisit communication strategies as far as the restructuring is concerned and address the issue of individual consultant agreements to reduce the risk of misunderstanding and to mitigate the change in employment conditions.

The organization should clarify its position when it comes to the interpretation of a break in service of employment. Such a position should be applied consistently across all the offices in the organization to avoid allegations of unfairness.

The interpretation of what is considered a break in service is imperative, especially when indemnities applicable on the abolition of a post are accorded only to those who have been with the organization for more than five years.

Written communication to staff pertaining to their employment should be in a language that is easy for them to understand and that they use in their day-to-day functions.

#### **What can the Ombudsman do?**

The Ombudsmen often invite the administration to review their change management processes and communication strategies with a view to addressing the perception of unfairness and thus contribute to informing the organization's risk analysis.

The organizations should put in place mechanisms to address promptly and transparently all queries and disputes that are a result of the change process.

The Ombudsmen empower staff who visit the Office to discuss their concerns with senior management with a view to finding clarity and solutions to their problems.

The Office of the Ombudsman is often called upon by staff because there is a total lack of trust in the systems in place that are intended to assist the organization in implementing change. The Office helps to identify trust-builders and restore integrity in the processes and provide feedback to the organizations on how their efforts are perceived.

The Office of the Ombudsman can listen to all parties concerned and facilitates dialogue between those who are affected by the abolition of post and the administration. The Ombudsmen often act as a sounding board for staff members who are trying to assess whether there has been due process as far as the abolition is concerned. The Ombudsmen provide guidance on rights and options and help to manage the staff members' expectations.

The Office of the Ombudsman can assist the organizations in managing expectations surrounding career prospects and the implications of post abolition. In such situations, the Ombudsmen have to emphasize that intervention by the Office does not necessarily mean that the decision to abolish the post will be reversed.

## B. Career management

### Selection and recruitment

Selection and recruitment has been one of the main issues that have brought visitors to the Office of the Ombudsman over the past five years. In the annual report for 2011, for example, the challenges to the competency-based interview practices were highlighted. During the current reporting period, the Office received visitors that sought assistance to address the repercussions that arose from a bad interview experience. In some of these cases, it seems that interviewers are not adequately trained in interviewing skills. This is particularly serious at a time when the United Nations is increasingly relying on the competency-based interview model. The Office receives accounts of interviews that are not structured and sometimes of the rudeness on the part of interviewers. It seems axiomatic that the interviewers should try to create a relaxing atmosphere to encourage interviewees to show their potential. In

addition, the Office has had to address concerns from staff pertaining to the administering of interview tests as a part of the recruitment process. These tests are often administered electronically in locations around the world that do not have reliable access to electricity or internet connectivity. Incidents of tests being recorded as submitted but which are in fact not received at the administrative centre have been reported to the Office. In such cases, where the stakes are high for all parties concerned, it is difficult to arrive at an informal resolution without jeopardizing the whole process. It is also often difficult to establish where exactly the system went wrong.

Another issue brought to the attention of the Ombudsmen is interference with the recruitment process. The Ombudsmen have observed situations where human resources specialists have recommended a candidate after a competitive recruitment process only to see the chosen candidate denied the position because management has somebody else in mind. The reasons put forward by management usually pertain to political considerations, geographical preference or organizational strategic placements. This often derails the integrity of the recruitment process and demonstrates a lack of transparency. In addition, it is not unusual for the Office of the Ombudsman to be contacted by potential candidates who want to know whether the job advertised is indeed a genuine vacancy. This usually means that although a position is advertised, it is targeted for a preferred candidate.

In managing recruitment decisions, candidates have often found that while they are qualified technically for the positions as demonstrated during the recruitment process, they are not a good fit for the context and the team that they are to manage or function in. For example, a newly recruited supervisor may have had experience exclusively at headquarters or regional offices and is then deployed to a hardship duty station; another example is when a deputy country director, previously an advisor with no supervisory responsibility at headquarters, has to assume a supervisory role of which he or she has

Written communication to staff pertaining to their employment should be in a language that is easy for them to understand.

little or no experience. In cases such as these, it is important to look at recruitment holistically so that once a decision is made, it supports the overall mandate of the organization instead of inhibiting it.

The Office of the Ombudsman has received cases pertaining to the withdrawal of offers of appointment. In such cases, candidates who have been offered positions that have later been withdrawn by the organization for various reasons have threatened litigation and compensation for loss. The recruitment process has usually gone beyond the initial stages and the candidates have either begun

induction courses or have been given assurances of a start date and have been informed of their reporting lines. The organization is therefore under a lot of pressure to honour the commitment made. Sometimes the withdrawal of the offer is due to negative references that have been received late by the organizations. The Office has observed that

withdrawals of offers also occur in situations where responsibility for the recruitment falls on more than one agency. When the candidates are eventually recruited, there are still times when the organization fails to provide adequate induction and chances for the new staff member to become fully integrated. This results in less productivity in the workplace and causes tension that could have been avoided.

### Separation

When a staff member leaves the organization – for whatever reason – the staff member should be treated in a dignified manner throughout the separation process. On some occasions, staff members contact the Office of the Ombudsman because the staff member and the organization have a different understanding of when the last day in office will be. A number of visitors to the Office in 2013 needed to explore options when faced with separation from the organization. They were frustrated by the lack of response (referred to as “a deafening silence”) from the management and from human resources representatives to the questions they had raised about the process, date and conditions of

separation. This lack of response aggravated their feelings of being regarded as worthless and abandoned. *“I’d like to know some precise dates. Why does one person tell me one thing and another person tell me something else? What is going to happen to me? I feel after all these years that my knowledge, experience, strengths and capacities count for nothing. I feel left behind on the battle field.”* These are examples of comments from visitors. In trying to get information for the visitors, the Ombudsmen have discovered that it is indeed difficult to obtain timely, reliable answers to valid questions. Sometimes the people with the information are overwhelmed and are unable to respond within an acceptable time frame; at other times, it seems that the person responsible does not know the answer or makes a guess that may be educated or uneducated. Clearly, staff members who are facing impending separation from the organization need an informed, understanding and sympathetic guide to help them to navigate the difficult path to separation with dignity, maintaining a sense of their contribution to the organization, which in some cases stretches over decades. In the absence of this human face, visitors sometimes see an anchor to reality and reliability in the Ombudsmen, who must nevertheless constantly remind the visitor that they are not staff counsellors and do not take executive decisions. Figure 5 shows a breakdown of issues in the job- and career- related category.

Agreed separation is where the organization and the staff member agree to end the contract of employment before its expiration. This agreement may include an indemnity in the form of a separation package in exchange of an agreement not to contest the decision to terminate the staff member’s contract. The process of negotiation in an agreed separation is often tense and requires a reasonably good grasp of the rules and regulations. Staff that are faced with agreed separation are often not equipped with an intimate understanding of the rules and financial implications, which can sometimes put them at a disadvantage. Although there is support provided by most organizations to assist staff in such situations, staff often draw attention to the fact that information regarding agreed separations are not easily available. Staff members are often in need of a third party to assist them to go through the process.

When a staff member leaves the organization – for whatever reason – the staff member should be treated in a dignified manner throughout the separation process

The Ombudsmen heard grievances from long-serving staff members who had very few years to retirement and were experiencing a hostile work environment that they attributed to their age and the fact that they were due to retire soon. These staff members complain of assignments being withdrawn from their portfolio and of supervisors who suddenly give negative feedback such as “*she has an attitude problem*”. It appears that more pressure was being put on staff members such as these to retire early and the administration seemed to frustrate their efforts to get constructive feedback on possible job openings.

At times, visitors do not know where to go to get information at such a critical moment in their lives. As noted above, despite writing or speaking to the human resources services in search of information, most often repeatedly, 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 as a result of the lack of

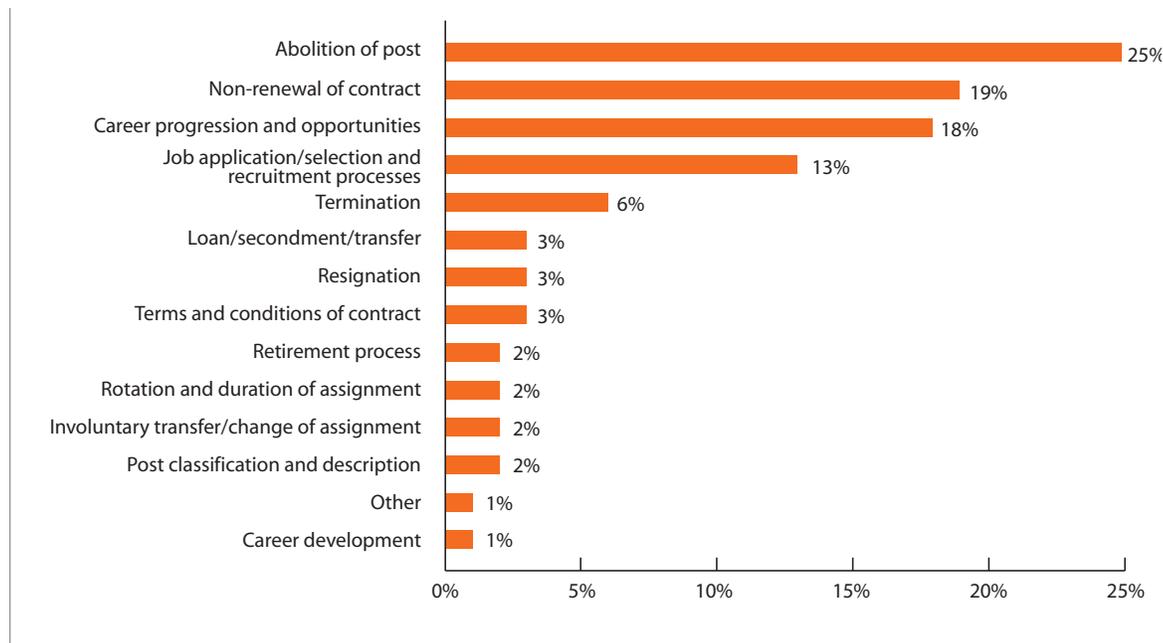
response and sometimes conclude that the organization either does not care what happens to them or is planning some action that will have irreversible, negative consequences – and such planned action must therefore not be shared with the staff members to avoid any pre-emptive action on their part.

During career transition, in some cases, staff members have felt that human resources representatives have not provided the support they expected during the recruitment process, especially the interview segment. This seeming lack of support may in fact have the effect of making the staff member in transition feel even more stigmatized. It is one thing to be displaced but it is quite another merely to have attention drawn to this fact with no strategic backing at such a sensitive time. The result can be that staff members feel like pariahs and form the impression that they are in fact being treated like pariahs.

### Gender

The funds and programmes have made strong commitments to attain gender parity at all levels of the organizations, including adopting strategies, human resources policies and legislation to that end. Despite the increases in the number of women at mid- and senior- level management over the last decade, much remains to be done, especially in cases

**Figure 5. Job- and career-related issues, 2013**



where men are recruited for positions when there are qualified, internal women candidates. The Ombudsmen have found it very difficult to understand how policies aimed at increasing the number of women are conveniently ignored when the hiring manager decides to recruit a man.

In pursuing gender parity in the work place, it is important to remember that it is not a question of degrees of qualification: if a woman meets the requirements to be designated as qualified then the policies state that she should be hired in preference to a man. It is thus a specious argument to claim that the man is better qualified and should therefore be recruited. Unfortunately, the Ombudsmen have received a number of cases where this has happened.

The Ombudsmen have found it very difficult to understand how policies aimed at increasing the number of women are conveniently ignored when the hiring manager decides to recruit a man.

In some cases, the unsuccessful woman has not been willing to contest the process out of fear of retaliation and loss of the job she already has, while in other cases, the argument has been made that since the man has already been recruited and has taken up the position, it is not possible to reverse the process. There is little that a woman can do in these circumstances but apply for another post when one becomes available. In

speaking with the Ombudsmen, the unsuccessful women candidates have voiced their frustration and disillusion at the failure of the organization to abide by its own policies and some have reached the conclusion that they have no alternative but to look for positions in other organizations, where more than lip service may be paid to gender-parity issues.

#### **What can the Organization do?**

In recruiting for management positions, the administration should focus not only on selecting the right candidate technically but also ensure the right fit for the team that the new manager will have under his or her responsibility. This is particularly important when a manager has been recruited from outside the organization. In such cases, it might be best to ensure that the newly

recruited manager is able to call on an experienced deputy or other experienced support.

Recruitment processes play an extremely important role in fulfilling the organization's mission. It is essential for those who are on interview panels to have adequate training in interviewing candidates. As recruitment interviews are consistently being administered online, it is equally essential that the interviewee and the test administrator understand their different responsibilities when it comes to the taking and submission of the test.

In situations where the recruitment process has reached the final stage and employment is imminent but the offer is retracted, the organization needs to communicate with the candidate measures that will be taken to mitigate any losses that might have been incurred by the candidate due to the withdrawal of an offer. The organization should take steps to ensure that all reference checks are completed and received before sending offers of appointment to candidates.

On those rare occasions when a strategic placement as a result of an executive decision takes place, the administration must demonstrate that the decision has been taken in good faith, following the relevant procedures and without bias and that the person placed has the right profile to meet the strategic objectives of the organization. Failure to observe due process in recruitment causes distrust and risks undermining the fairness of the entire process. In such situations, it is imperative that the organization address any perception of unfairness of the decision immediately and that the administration be seen to be held accountable for its decision.

There needs to be a clear understanding on when the last day of the work will be. This is important for after-service health insurance and pension reasons. Separation letters should contain clear, comprehensive information on all aspects of the separation and internal control mechanisms should be strengthened so as to prevent clerical error, which causes a great amount of unnecessary disagreement.

The organization should strengthen monitoring mechanisms and make conditions for waivers more stringent when it comes to ensuring compliance with gender-parity strategies and policies. Decisions to recruit a male candidate when there is an equally

qualified female candidate should be scrutinized and justifications from the hiring manager should be requested and carefully examined.

The human resources function in the funds and programmes needs to strengthen its advocacy role in assisting staff in career transition.

The organization should uphold the principle that all staff members have a right to a work environment where they feel protected and not discriminated against because of their age or their long-serving status.

### **What can the Ombudsman do?**

The Ombudsmen have been able to assist managers seeking avenues of support within the organization, including honest feedback on how best to manage difficult situations in the workplace that may have been caused by their lack of familiarity with the organization's practices.

The Ombudsmen can bring allegations of questionable recruitment processes to the attention of the administration with a view to ensuring that recruitment practices retain their credibility.

The Office of the Ombudsman can provide a safe and confidential space for parties to conduct negotiations during the separation process. The Ombudsmen can enter into dialogue with 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 staff member and human resources to address it in a practical, ethical and understanding way.

### **Inter-agency mobility**

It is not unusual for the Office of the Ombudsman to receive staff who have been in their position for over 20 years and have come to the Office because their careers have stagnated and they are looking for a change either within their own organization or in another organization of the United Nations system. Since the organizations of the United Nations system subscribe to the principle of inter-agency mobility, staff members are encouraged to believe that career mobility among these bodies will not be met with many challenges. This would mean, for example, that an administrative associate in one organization could successfully be recruited for a similar position in another without being considered as an external candidate. In situations where

the staff member on a fixed-term contract is on a rotational post, there is an expectancy that the administration will facilitate the job application and selection process. Often staff on these types of posts have a proven track record of good performance and adaptability. However, inter-agency mobility does in fact present a number of obstacles.

In this context, the Office of the Ombudsman understands that mobility does not necessarily have to be limited to mobility between organizations. Practice has demonstrated that mobility can be achieved within the organization through, for instance, lateral moves or a re-classification of functions. Nevertheless, the Office has been contacted by staff who highlight that support for mobility by the organization is non-existent or minimal at best. Since it services five organizations, the Office is uniquely placed to observe mobility practices from one agency to the next and has noted the reluctance on the part of some organizations to facilitate inter-agency mobility. The reluctance of an organization to facilitate inter-agency mobility is sometimes based on the costs involved: accepting a staff member from another organization on a transfer means that the receiving organization will incur costs. It is difficult for staff who have been refused a transfer to understand why financial costs are given as the reason when the policy seems to encourage transfer within the common system. This often leads to perceptions of bias and to conflict.

Another factor that has been brought to the attention of the Office of the Ombudsman is that staff members who have served with an organization for more than five years are being advised that they would have to resign in order to take up positions in other organizations of the system. Again, the financial costs incurred by a transfer are given as the reason that an organization prefers a new recruitment. The receiving agency does not want to inherit the accumulated rights and financial costs associated with the staff members' longevity within the parent organization.

The Ombudsmen can bring allegations of questionable recruitment processes to the attention of the administration with a view to ensuring that recruitment practices retain their credibility.

There are also major obstacles facing staff members who choose secondment to another organization as a means to pursuing career options that enhance mobility: when they return to their parent organization, they run the risk that there will be no position for them to return to and in any case they will have to return at the professional level at which they left even though they may have been promoted in the organization to which they were seconded. Staff in such situations often contact the Ombudsman to know what their rights are.

Some offices have an inter-agency component that enables them to manage inter-agency career expectations more realistically. In such circumstances, there is often a financial reason for organizations to work together under the Delivering-as-one umbrella, for example, or through the cross-

cutting nature of the work involved. In this kind of scenario, the Office of the Ombudsman has been contacted by staff who are unclear as to the accountabilities of the organizations concerned. Lines of functional accountability may be ambiguous or inexistent. In addition, the Office has observed that when staff are recruited in such hybrid circumstances, there is often no focal point for the recruitment; in those cases where

there is a focal point, the recruitment is often carried out according to the regulations of one of the organizations and not according to the amalgamated framework of the hybrid mechanism.

#### **What can the Organization do?**

The funds and programmes should have a mobility policy in place that gives a cost-benefit analysis of mobility mechanisms.

The organization should put in place mechanisms that specifically monitor staff who are on secondment in order for them to have support in managing their careers once they return to the parent organization. There needs to be more effort on the part of the parent organization to give

incentives to staff to seek career opportunities in other organizations.

In circumstances where many agencies are responsible for the recruitment and supervision of staff, it is important to designate a focal point and to have clear lines of accountability for decisions pertaining to staff employment.

#### **What can the Ombudsman do?**

The Ombudsmen often guide staff on their options and rights when navigating the provisions for inter-agency mobility. The Ombudsmen often channel staff within the system to assist in addressing their career situations with senior management.

### **C. Staff-management relations**

The Office of the Ombudsman received a number of concerns and requests for advice on staff-management relations during the reporting period. These concerns are (a) the absence of staff representation in some duty stations; (b) the lack of fully defined roles and responsibilities for staff representatives; (c) the absence of systematic staff-management relations; (d) issues relating to the internal procedures of staff representational bodies; (e) coverage of colleagues who are not recruited as staff members under 100 series contracts; and (f) difficulties in obtaining release to perform staff representational functions.

During outreach missions, the Ombudsmen were approached by colleagues seeking advice on the role of local staff associations and bodies. Several duty stations of some of the funds and programmes covered by the Office do not seem to have active staff representation. In many locations, even in some with staff representation, there did not seem to be a practice of systematic consultative staff-management relations. Furthermore, the Ombudsmen received visitors raising questions about the internal governance processes of staff representation and the perceived absence of the effective functioning of formal and informal recourse procedures that are available to resolve related disputes in some of the funds and programmes covered by the Office.

Effective staff-management relations can develop in an environment only when there is trust. Such an environment will encourage staff representatives to

The organization should put in place mechanisms that specifically monitor staff who are on secondment in order for them to have support in managing their careers once they return to the parent organization.

advocate positively for the interests of the workforce and cause management to recognize and actively promote the value of staff-management relations. A collaborative, constructive system of staff-management relations at the country, regional and global levels is a central condition to develop a climate of mutual trust and respect, built on effective participation and transparency. These are all critical success factors in building corporate ownership and support, particularly in times of change.

#### **What can the Organization do?**

In consultation with staff representatives, identify and promote conditions that allow for an organizational culture of collaborative staff-management relations at the country, regional and global levels.

Active participation of staff representatives should be encouraged and acknowledged by the management. The funds and programmes should ensure that not only staff members but all personnel have representation that can effectively advocate for them.

It would be useful for senior management to reiterate their support for the staff representation and their commitment to ensuring that there will be no negative impact on a staff member's career as a direct result of participation in a body representing staff.

The essence of good governance is the way that bodies representing staff are managed and structured. The success of staff representation has a lot to do with how staff and other personnel perceive the rules that guide their interaction with their representatives. More effort should be made by staff associations and other bodies representing staff to elucidate on governance rules and procedures in order to foster transparency and further commitment from staff.

#### **What can the Ombudsman do?**

The Office of the Ombudsman considers staff representatives as important stakeholders in building effective organizational climates and has organized regular meetings and workshops with staff representatives at country, regional and global levels. The Ombudsmen will continue to advocate the critical importance of active and respectful staff-management relations in the funds and programmes covered by the Office.

The Ombudsmen call upon both staff and management to build on best practice and to ensure a systematic, consultative approach on all issues

affecting staff welfare, working conditions and human resources policies, as mandated by the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules.

#### **D. Feedback culture and self-management**

Since the Office of the Ombudsman began its work in 2002, the repeated observation made by organizational development experts that there are no perfect performance-management systems seems also to be true for the funds and programmes. The funds and programmes performance-management systems have undergone various reforms.

It is well known in organizations that performance-management systems are often retooled and are themselves a point of disagreement. The Office would like to urge the organizations to recognize that there is no perfect feedback system and no quick solution to endemic performance problems. Certainly the ravages of under- or non-performance cannot be tackled through a system change alone but through a willingness and commitment of management and staff to comply with their obligations under the system.

Feedback can take different forms, each with a different purpose. By way of example, appreciation is a form of feedback that can help to motivate and encourage staff. Feedback can also be provided in the form of coaching to help to increase knowledge, skills, capacity and growth or to raise the level of emotional intelligence in work relationships. Another form of feedback is telling people where they stand.

From conversations with visitors, the Office of the Ombudsman has noticed that the feedback provided is often not the feedback sought. It is therefore important to align the feedback needed and the feedback being offered.

There seems to be a correlation between lack of feedback and non-performance. A non- or under-performer provides a difficult challenge for not only the supervisor but other colleagues as well. In most cases where an office is paralyzed by the non-performance of a staff member, that same staff member has not had a discussion with the supervisor or has never been given feedback on his or her performance.

Feedback can take different forms, each with a different purpose.

As a result, the lack of performance continues unabated with little or no repercussion for the non-performing staff member. Giving feedback is important. Without candid feedback, problems fester, the manager and the system lose credibility, damaging trust, working relationships, motivation and team cohesion. The funds and programmes have all to a varying degree invested in developing feedback mechanisms that are more accessible, user-friendly and convenient. Technology has assisted in making the feedback process transparent with some agencies publishing on the intranet the rates at which performance mechanisms are being completed. This has resulted in a higher compliance rate in some organizations in completing performance evaluations.

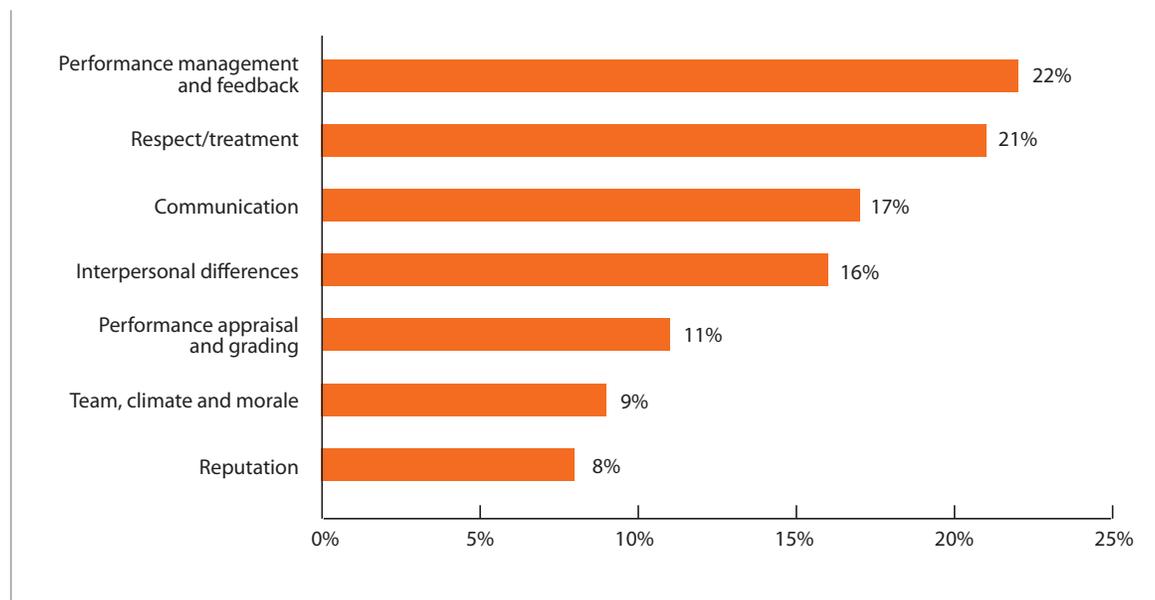
There is a need for further improvement in the quality of the feedback received. At the same time some supervisors argue: *“providing feedback takes time away from my primary tasks and there is no reward and acknowledgement for doing it well.”* It is not unusual to find comments by supervisors such as: *“wish you the best of luck for the future,”* in a situation where no discussion about contract renewal has been had. There are also instances where the lack of feedback leads to feelings of insecurity on the part of the staff member. The Office of the Ombudsman finds that the lack of feedback also affects those colleagues on con-

sultancy contracts. In such cases, payment is subject to deliverables that have been satisfactorily performed. It is not unusual for a consultant to contact the Office because he or she has not been paid and the reason given for this is non-satisfactory performance. It is when payment is refused or delayed that the consultant hears for the first time that performance was unsatisfactory. Often there is a reluctance to give negative feedback on the part of supervisors and this reluctance seems to be a way for the supervisors to avoid difficult conversations and conflict. In the experience of the Office such behaviour only exacerbates the situation.

Figure 6 shows a breakdown of evaluative relationship issues (i.e., relationships between supervisors and supervisees) brought to the attention of the Ombudsmen. The majority of the issues have a lot to do with feedback and communication.

Constructive feedback is sometimes given in an abrasive, humiliating manner by the supervisor. Visitors to the Office of the Ombudsman continue to bring grievances about their supervisors’ management style. The complaints always seem to allude to suffering and humiliation to such an extent that the morale in the workplace is low. The level of trust in the workplace drops and the staff members’ confidence and dignity are undermined or completely

**Figure 6. Evaluative relationship issues, 2013**



obliterated. In such situations, the staff member misses what could be useful, constructive feedback and focuses on the abusive way that the feedback is being communicated.

Emotional intelligence is often misinterpreted in the workplace to mean a soft skill that is unimportant and therefore little attention should be paid to it. As a result, organizations do not encourage the awareness and use of emotional intelligence in those with supervisory responsibility and certainly do not prioritize its use even when they acknowledge that it exists. The outcome is often more intractable interpersonal conflict in the workplace.

The other performance-related factor that seems to be causing conflict in the workplace is the relationship between non-performance and contract extensions. The Office of the Ombudsman frequently receives grievances from staff who have been given a negative performance evaluation and subsequently receive a letter informing them that their contract is not going to be renewed owing to lack of funding. It is difficult not to see a link between the two administrative actions. Often the off-the-record reason that is informally shared with the staff member is that he or she is a non-performer. On close examination of the performance evaluation, it becomes clear that there have not been frequent discussions with the staff member on his or her work. In addition, the supervisors' comments are vague and do not give constructive feedback. It is clear there is no effective relationship between the supervisor and supervisee. The same is true when staff members contact the Office after having received notification that their post has been abolished and they have received a negative performance assessment. The staff member's perception is that he or she is being targeted for personal reasons and the performance assessment is being used as a weapon.

Rebuttals of performance appraisals continue to be an issue for the Office of the Ombudsman. All the funds and programmes have some kind of procedure for rebutting a performance appraisal but this mechanism is used inconsistently and there are varying levels of understanding about the process.

Since the mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman is not to intercede when there are still official avenues open that may resolve a work-related problem, there is normally no direct intervention when there are differences of opinions, or outright dis-

putes, over the findings of performance appraisal. However, when staff members approach the Office with complaints about how they have been appraised, the first question asked is whether or not a rebuttal was prepared. There are a variety of answers: some staff members are unaware that it is their right to prepare a rebuttal and feel that if they rebut it might result in retaliation. Others are unaware of the time requirements in which to prepare a rebuttal and often delay, which can mean that it is too late to submit the appropriate documentation. When the staff member has not rebutted the performance appraisal and approaches the Office only when the contract has not been renewed, there is little that the Ombudsmen can do.

The policy of the Office of the Ombudsman is always to suggest that a staff member submit a rebuttal if he or she feels that the appraisal was inaccurate or unfair and if the matter cannot be resolved through discussion with the supervisor. The Ombudsmen stress that this is the only way in which the staff member's views will be represented in the official personnel file.

### **What can the Organization do?**

The funds and programmes need to put in place mechanisms to ensure that supervisors comply with performance-management requirements and shift from blame conversations to joint contribution conversations, focusing on learning and opportunity.

All staff should receive training on giving and receiving feedback. This training should be mandatory for staff who have supervisory responsibility. Since the ability to receive and act on feedback has the greatest outcome from a performance evaluation, organizations are encouraged to assist receivers of feedback to strengthen skills of mindfulness and self-reflection.

Performance evaluations should be fair, consistent, predictable, precise and constructive. If a staff member or a consultant is not performing, then management should list the reasons for non-performance and examples of non-performance should be documented.

Organizations do not encourage the awareness and use of emotional intelligence in those with supervisory responsibility.

Performance evaluations should be fair, consistent, predictable, precise and constructive.

The organization should invest in monitoring the level of emotional intelligence within management not only through human resources mechanisms such as 360 degree feedback but also through more focused monitoring during competency interviews, for example. The lack of adequate emotional intelligence levels within management undermines

the credibility of management within the organization. There is a need for a greater degree of self-awareness and self-reflection, which should be recognized as core competencies in any recruitment process, particularly when management positions are concerned.

Organizations can ensure that policies and procedures are included in detail in the information available to staff members. It would be useful to have this information in the instructions that accompany the preparation of performance appraisals. The time line must also be clearly included. Managers should be familiar with the process since staff members often think that simply refusing to sign an appraisal initiates the rebuttal process. In fact, the appraisal must be completed and signed before the rebuttal process can start. A procedure should be established so that the process, when initiated by a staff member, can be completed in a timely fashion.

The organization must be aware that submitting a rebuttal is a staff member's right and should not be construed as grounds for retaliation.

#### **What can the Ombudsman do?**

The Ombudsmen can mediate between supervisor and supervisees who have difficulties communicating in general.

The Ombudsmen can coach staff members who need specific help communicating feedback or receiving feedback.

The Ombudsmen must be familiar with all the procedures for performance appraisals in the funds and programmes so that visitors know how to proceed in the case of disputes over performance. The Ombudsmen can inform the visitor that such a process is a right and they will be protected from retaliation. It should be stressed that a rebuttal pro-

vides the only opportunity for a staff member to tell his or her side of the story and have this information placed in his or her file. Although the Ombudsmen cannot officially intervene in the rebuttal process, informal advice and guidance can be offered on how best to prepare the rebuttal documentation.

#### **E. Fairness, trust, leadership and inclusiveness in the workplace**

*"This is not fair,"* is a frequent statement made by visitors to the Office of the Ombudsman. Fairness plays an important role in conflict management. The terms of reference of the Office of the Ombudsman refer to promoting justice and fairness. But what does that mean? What is fairness and how might a better understanding of the dimensions of fairness assist in conflict resolution?

In a diverse, multicultural workplace, many elements come into play involving different values and contexts. It is therefore difficult to define fairness in a universally applicable manner. However, there are dimensions of fairness that regularly come up in cases brought to the Office of the Ombudsman that can help describe the dimensions of fairness.

An important element in fairness is trust. Relations in the workplace have to be built on trust. Trust takes time to build but can be easily destroyed. When the Office of the Ombudsman deals with issues that involve lack of trust, they are often the result of absence of or improper communication, which contributes to the lack of transparency and collaboration in the workplace. Although there is evidence of good practices to engender trust and to communicate as transparently as possible on the part of management, the majority of the cases in evaluative relationships and in the job and career categories demonstrate that the lack of trust is a recurring underlying root cause of conflict. It is not unusual for the Ombudsmen to hear when trying to bring resolution to a matter that has been brought to their attention the following, *"this staff member has always been this way – this will never change,"* or *"I heard that the staff member shouted in the corridor 15 years ago and I have blocked her promotion ever since."* It is difficult to build trust with this type of mindset. This kind of information is not shared openly with the staff member but the staff member may

hear it from others in an indirect and often more damaging way.

Another example of trust-destroying behaviour is when the messages conveyed by the organization pertaining to change do not align with management's actions. This sends a very disturbing message to the workforce and implies that management cannot be trusted. Staff then generally act according to their own understanding of situations and circumstances, often to the detriment of the organization. Of course, the organization itself may be adapting to change and clarity can sometimes be a challenge. Nevertheless, lack of clarity should not be used to cloak hidden agendas. One way to avoid this kind of situation is to ensure inclusiveness in decision-making.

#### **F. Potential of informal conflict resolution, including mediation**

One of the advantages of informal conflict resolution is that it is readily available. When a dispute occurs, there are usually some staff members willing to act as neutral parties to the dispute. Some country offices create informal resolution mechanisms of their own, with some even calling the individuals responsible ombudspersons despite instructions from the executive heads of the funds and programmes to refrain from this practice. Other offices rely on human resource professionals to provide informal resolution services in a dispute. In addition, it is not uncommon that the Office of the Ombudsman is requested to intervene when attempts at informal resolution have been unsuccessful. In many of these cases, all the resources locally available for informal resolution have been depleted yet the office is paralysed to such an extent that work is seriously affected.

When the Office of the Ombudsman was created in 2002, it professionalized informal conflict resolution within the funds and programmes. It meant that principles of confidentiality, neutrality, independence and informality were rigorously adhered to and the practice of informal resolution followed strict parameters and terms of reference. Whereas other forms of dispute resolution continued within the agencies, the role of the Ombudsman was solely and exclusively exercised by the Office of the Ombudsman. It meant that local

ombudspersons had to refrain from using the term “ombudsperson”, as noted above, but could nevertheless offer, under a different heading, an initial approach to resolve conflicts. When disputes that have already benefited from efforts to resolve them are referred to the Office of the Ombudsman, the question often arises as to whether the principles of confidentiality, neutrality, independence and informality have been strictly adhered to. If the answer is no, there is a high risk that conflicts will further escalate and result in tremendous costs to the organizations and staff members.

#### **What can the Organization do?**

The staff and management of the funds and programmes should encourage conflict resolution mechanisms that are tailored to their local conditions with the understanding that the ombudsman mechanism for resolving conflict is professionalized and adheres to strict principles of neutrality, confidentiality, independence and informality. The term “Ombudsman” or “Ombudsperson” can be used only to describe the Ombudsmen working in the Office of the Ombudsman and cannot be used in country offices to identify staff involved in dispute resolution as this causes confusion, the ombudsman principles cannot be upheld and the credibility of the Ombudsman function risks being undermined.

The administration should contact the Office of the Ombudsman for guidance on whether an informal dispute mechanism that is locally available is suitable.

In situations where a third party, including a member of the human resources department or a senior manager, is designated as a facilitator of conversations, the administration must ensure that the principles of confidentiality, neutrality and impartiality are upheld as much as possible. Otherwise, the whole purpose of a facilitated or mediated discussion risks being defeated.

#### **What can the Ombudsman do?**

The Office of the Ombudsman conducts outreach to funds and programme personnel through which it describes the elements, dynamics, potential and benefits of informal conflict resolution.

Relations in the workplace have to be built on trust.

The Office of the Ombudsman conducts mediation, assists in facilitating communication and offers coaching and team-building interventions.

## **G. Conflict management and organizational culture**

### **The issue**

The Office of the Ombudsman observes that it has become increasingly apparent that a lack of engagement and investment in conflict management has negative effects on organizations (loss of efficiency, high direct and indirect conflict costs, employee discontent and high staff turnover, disregarding the potential in change).

There is a need for closer consultation among stakeholders involved in conflict management.

A high level of information-sharing among concerned stakeholders can mitigate such negative effects and contribute to the bottom line by providing collaborative and more effective tools to address difficult situations. The Office of the Ombudsman has recommended in previous reports that there is a need for closer consultation among stakeholders involved in conflict management and strengthening of conflict management systems in the funds and programmes. Such stakeholder collaboration is owned by the participants themselves and not by the Office of the Ombudsman. It allows stakeholders involved in conflict management to discuss issues of common

concern, including conflict prevention and options for conflict management.

Stakeholders in conflict management include but are not limited to representatives from human resources, legal services, ethics and investigation offices, staff associations and the Office of the Ombudsman as well as the Office of Staff Legal Assistance (OSLA), who provide legal advice and representation for staff. The close collaboration between the Office of the Ombudsman and OSLA has helped parties to understand both the legal framework and the potential of informal conflict resolution, including mediation, and has thus contributed to resolving cases more effectively.

### **What can the Organization do?**

The funds and programmes should incorporate conflict management consultations within their business practices and stakeholder meetings should be held on a more regular basis.

The funds and programmes should incorporate current thinking about conflict management systems within their accountability frameworks.

### **What can the Ombudsman do?**

The Office of the Ombudsman can pro-actively promote regular stakeholder meetings and the development of collaborative solutions to conflict and other workplace problems for both management and staff.

The Office can provide a safe space to hold such meetings.

# Added Value of the Office of the Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman is often asked about the value of its role within the organization. The functions of an Ombudsman are varied and complex. An Ombudsman may be called to mediate a dispute, to act as a neutral shuttle diplomat, to be a compassionate face of the organization, to provide guidance on a particular staff management issue, to surface a matter of particular sensitivity to senior management or to coach a colleague on how to give feedback. All of these are actions in different contexts and offer varying degrees of usefulness to the organization's business strategy.

The Ombudsman practice is a profession, yet many seem not to understand the ways in which the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes can help the funds and programmes. Much of what the Ombudsmen do is confidential but it can be evidenced by the relationships built within the organization and the ways in which the Office uses its discretion and builds trustworthiness within the organization. In addition, a lot of what the Ombudsmen do is to help to generate options for those dealing with conflict in the workplace. Figure 8 below is a description of the functions of the Office and figure 9 shows the framework of potential value of the Office of the Ombudsman in organizations.

**Figure 7. Functions of the Office of the Ombudsman**

- Provide a safe, confidential space
- Remain independent
- Listen to interests and needs of all parties in a neutral manner
- Provide informal services
- Provide a zero-barrier office
- Ensure daily/ weekly contacts with wide range of stakeholders in organization
- Provide quick response/ follow-up
- Help people to help themselves (empower)
- Teach "just in time" conflict management skills
- Provide informal resolution tools (shuttle diplomacy/mediation)
- Act as an early-warning system
- Surface issues
- Alleviate non-reporting of misconduct
- Showcase best practice
- Track patterns of concern
- Make referrals
- Engage in outreach
- Support fair process
- Help visitors to understand policies and procedures
- Provide input on policy development

**Figure 8. Framework of the potential added value of the of the Office of the Ombudsman**

<b>Organizations</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Clients</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Higher productivity</li><li>• Higher trust level</li><li>• Stronger transparency and flexibility</li><li>• Increased potential for creativity and innovation</li><li>• Increased retention</li><li>• Better reputation</li><li>• More effective risk-management</li><li>• Lower stress levels</li><li>• Lower number of sick days</li><li>• Less incivility</li><li>• Lower levels of theft/sabotage</li><li>• Lower risk of accidents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individual well-being strengthened</li><li>• Increased feeling of empowerment</li><li>• Higher levels of self-reflection and mindfulness</li><li>• Higher engagement and motivation</li><li>• Higher commitment to team work</li><li>• Stronger appreciation of respect and diversity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Higher level of trust in oversight mechanisms and in quality of organization's projects and programmes</li><li>• Higher levels of commitment to provide financial support</li><li>• Increased trust in the United Nations activities</li></ul>

# Networking and professional development

---

The Office of the Ombudsman attended the 11th Annual Meeting for United Nations and Related International Organizations, where information on a number of themes that concerned the Ombudsman profession such as the fear of retaliation and the psychological and emotional aspects underpinning conflicts were discussed. In addition, the Office

participated in the Annual Conferences of the International Ombudsman Association and of the Association of Conflict Resolution. Together with the three pillars within the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, the Office of the Ombudsman attended and participated in meetings on coordination and case management.

# Looking ahead

---

The Office of the Ombudsman will explore ways in which its expertise, observations and recommendations made over the year can be translated more effectively into organizational learning. As part of that approach, the Office will develop a partnership with the United Nations System Staff College and Durham University to pilot leadership training, with course content adapted from real-life workplace scenarios.

The Office will position itself more pro-actively as a strategic partner to advance business strategies of the funds and programmes covered, by linking its activities and recommendations to organizational priorities such as organizational change and risk management. In this context, the Office will develop tools to assist organizations in change processes and will use the Office's expertise and data to provide analysis, including on cost implications.

Maintaining the independence of the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and

Programmes to provide dedicated services to the workforce of the funds and programmes covered remains a primary focus of the Office.

The Office will continue building conflict management culture and capacity within the funds and programmes by further developing the Respectful Workplace Advisor system adapted to specific environments and contexts.

The Office is in the process of upgrading its intranet presence in all funds and programmes covered and will develop user-friendly, informative materials to allow all personnel to make more use of informal conflict resolution mechanisms.

Promotion of wider use of mediation and the building of a mediation culture will remain a priority for the Office. Outreach missions, mediation training and further strengthening of the Respectful Workplace Adviser system in the funds and programmes covered will serve to attain that objective.

# Recommendations

---

## Change and its implications

1. Terminology and policies introduced in times of restructuring should make reference to previous policies that dealt with the same subject matter and should highlight what provisions have been changed.
2. The organizations should put in place mechanisms that ensure that queries and disputes that are a result of the change process are addressed promptly and transparently. In a culture of lack of trust, every effort should be used to communicate the change more effectively.
3. Career options and planning should be made available to internal candidates affected by change management processes.
4. In cases where the post of a long-serving staff member is abolished and the organization does not renew the contract or allows it to expire, the organization should manage the expectations, rights and indemnities of the staff member concerned.
5. All support to displaced staff must be monitored for progress and quality. The organizations must articulate to all staff what exit strategy is in place to mitigate the risk of losing qualified staff.
6. There needs to be close monitoring of the individual consultant agreement modality. Management should revisit their communication strategy as far as the restructuring is concerned and address the issue of individual consultant agreements.

7. The organization should clarify its position when it comes to the interpretation of break in service of employment. Such a position should be applied consistently across all the offices in the organization to avoid allegations of unfairness. The interpretation of what is considered a break-in-service is imperative.
8. Written communication to staff pertaining to their employment should be in a language that is easy for them to understand and that they use in their day-to-day functions.

## Career management

9. In recruiting for management positions, the administration should focus not only on selecting the right candidate technically but also ensure the right fit for the team that the new manager will have under his or her responsibility. This is particularly important when a manager has been recruited from outside the organization. In such cases, it might be best to ensure that the newly recruited manager is able to call on an experienced deputy or other experienced support.
10. It is essential for those who are on interview panels to have adequate training in interviewing candidates. As recruitment interviews are consistently being administered online, it is equally essential that the interviewee and the test administrator understand their different responsibilities when it comes to the taking and submission of the test.
11. In situations where the recruitment process has reached the final stage and employment is imminent but the offer is retracted, the organization

needs to communicate with the candidate measures that will be taken to mitigate any losses that might have been incurred by the candidate due to the withdrawal of an offer. The organization should take steps to ensure that all reference checks are completed and received before sending offers of appointment to candidates.

12. On those rare occasions when a strategic placement as a result of an executive decision takes place, the administration must demonstrate that the decision has been taken in good faith, following the relevant procedures and without bias and that the person placed has the right profile to meet the strategic objectives of the organization.
13. Failure to observe due process in recruitment causes distrust and risks undermining the fairness of the entire process. In such situations, it is imperative for the organization to address any perception of unfairness of the decision immediately and that the administration is seen to be held accountable for its decision.
14. Separation letters should contain clear, comprehensive information on all aspects of the separation and internal control mechanisms should be strengthened so as to prevent clerical error, which causes a great amount of unnecessary disagreement.
15. The organization should strengthen monitoring mechanisms and make conditions for waivers more stringent when it comes to ensuring compliance with gender-parity strategies and policies. Decisions to recruit a male candidate when there is an equally qualified female candidate should be scrutinized and justifications from the hiring manager should be requested and carefully examined.
16. The human resources function in the funds and programmes needs to strengthen its support role in assisting staff in career transition.
17. The funds and programmes should have a mobility policy in place that gives a cost benefit analysis of mobility mechanisms.

18. The organizations should put in place mechanisms that specifically monitor staff who are on secondment in order for them to have support in managing their careers once they return to the parent organization. There needs to be more effort on the part of the parent organization to give incentives to staff to seek career opportunities in other organizations.
19. In circumstances where various agencies are responsible for the recruitment and supervision of staff, it is important to designate a focal point and to have clear lines of accountability when it comes to taking decisions pertaining to staff employment.

### **Feedback culture and self-management**

20. Supervisors within the funds and programmes need to ensure that they comply with their performance-management requirements and shift from blame conversations to joint-contribution conversations, focusing on learning and opportunity.
21. All staff should receive training on giving and receiving feedback. This training should be mandatory for staff who have supervisory responsibility. Since the ability to receive and act on feedback has the greatest outcome from a performance evaluation, organizations are encouraged to assist receivers of feedback to strengthen skills of mindfulness and self-reflection.
22. Performance evaluations should be fair, consistent, predictable, precise and constructive. If a staff member or a consultant is not performing, then management should list the reasons for non-performance and examples of non-performance should be documented.
23. The organization should invest in monitoring the level of emotional intelligence within management not only through human resources mechanisms such as 360 degree feedback but also more through more focused monitoring during competency interviews, for example. The lack of adequate emotional intelligence levels within management undermines the credibility

of management within the organization. There is a need for a greater degree of self-awareness and self-reflection, which should be recognized as core competencies in any recruitment process, particularly when management positions are concerned.

24. It would be useful to have information on rebuttals in the instructions that accompany the preparation of performance appraisals. The time line must also be clearly included. A procedure should be established so that the process, when initiated by a staff member, can be completed in a timely fashion.
25. The organization must be aware that submitting a rebuttal is a right of a staff member and should not be construed as grounds for retaliation.

#### **Potential of informal conflict resolution, including mediation**

26. The staff and management of the funds and programmes should encourage conflict resolution mechanisms that are tailored to their local conditions with the understanding that the ombudsman mechanism for resolving conflict is professionalized and adheres to strict principles of confidentiality, impartiality/ neutrality, independence and informality.

27. The use of the term “Ombudsman” or “Ombudsperson” is strictly limited to describe the Ombudsmen working in the Office of the Ombudsman and cannot be used in country offices to identify staff involved in dispute resolution as this causes confusion.

28. The administration should contact the Ombudsman for guidance on whether an informal dispute mechanism that is locally available is suitable. In situations where a third party, including a member of the human resources department or a senior manager, is designated as a facilitator of conversations, the administration must ensure that the principles of confidentiality and impartiality/ neutrality are upheld as much as possible. Otherwise, the whole purpose of a facilitated or mediated discussion is put at risk.

#### **Conflict management and organizational culture**

29. The funds and programmes should incorporate conflict management consultations within their business practices and stakeholder meetings should be held on a more regular basis.
30. The funds and programmes should incorporate current thinking about conflict management systems within their accountability frameworks.

# Voices

---

“¡Gracias por darnos tranquilidad!”

“Reconociendo el gran apoyo y soporte que ha sido usted para nosotros, nos ha dado mucha esperanza y fuerza, de verdad y de todo corazón estamos muy y más que agradecidos con su entrega y dedicación a nuestra solicitud.”

“In more ways than I expected, this conversation gave some kind of peace of mind to me. It really helped me to refocus on the issues.”

“Thank you for all your guidance and assistance. It is immensely appreciated.”

“Your advice to me at that time was priceless, just to stay cool and focus on my work. Thank you for that.”

“I thank you very much for your interest in the case and for your support and guidance.”

“Merci pour tes sages conseils et tes orientations.”

“Again, I want to thank you kindly for your guidance and advice since it has been a very trying time now with lots of uncertainty.”

“Thank you very much for your effort and time you gave to this matter. It is really appreciated.”

“I hope that my case will create an opportunity to help you guide other staff to avoid such a problem in the future.”

“Mil gracias por toda tu valiosa colaboración. Estoy eternamente muy agradecido.”

“Thank you very much for all your effort on putting this matter to an end.”

“Thank you again for all your guidance and for being such a good listener.”

“I will keep you posted, and reach out to you if I need more advice. You have been a HUGE help, and I am grateful you were an available source to discuss this matter with in detail and not feeling like there would be any repercussions.”

“I wanted to thank you for the support you provided at some very difficult times for me. The situation has clearly not been resolved as I would have hoped, and I feel enormous frustration and sadness. Nonetheless, the regular support provided at the end of a phone line at a time when I felt that there was zero management support was very important to me.”

“I really appreciate your being there for me through these very challenging times.”

“You have helped me wonderfully in the past and I am hoping you may do so once more by looking into what has caused this delay of the payment. Thanks in advance.”

“I just was writing to thank you for your help and support. I am not sure what is my next chapter but everything does fall in to place. One has to have faith, keep their integrity and never lose their humanity. I appreciate all the support you provided and it has helped me immensely to journey through and transition out of the organization.”

“I would like to thank you of all my heart for your immediate support, mediation and assistance in a very busy Christmas close-down period, and for being one of the few honest and decent persons in this terrible role play I feel I have, involuntarily, been part of since returning from my duty station. Your endless efforts of listening, sincere mediation and empathy has been fantastic, and much appreciated! Thanks so much!!!”

“I know you did the best you could and I appreciated all your concern and effort.”

# Issue Definitions

<b>1. Compensation and Benefits</b>	Salary, pension, leave, health insurance, various entitlements
<b>2. Evaluative Relationships</b>	Issues between colleagues with supervisory relationships
<b>3. Peer and Colleague Relationships</b>	Issues between colleagues with NO supervisory relationships
<b>4. Job and Career Progression</b>	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.
<b>5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance</b>	Harassment, discrimination, retaliation, gender and geographic balance; investigative/disciplinary processes, waste, fraud and abuse of funds
<b>6. Safety, Health, Wellbeing, Stress and Work/Life</b>	Working conditions; general wellbeing and stress; accommodation for disability or health conditions; issues with health, safety and security
<b>7. Services/Administration</b>	Responsiveness, timeliness and nature of response/services from sections providing services to staff (HR, pension fund, tax unit, etc...)
<b>8. Organizational, Leadership and Management</b>	Organizational climate, morale, culture, communication; change management, issues with leadership in the organization and management styles
<b>9. Values, Ethics and Standards</b>	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. James Lee, Mr. Eskandar Rastegar, Ms. Judit Revesz and Ms. Linda Schieber



*Top – left to right: Linda Schieber and Sharon Gordon-Smith*

*Below – left to right: Eskandar Rastegar, Nancy Ross, Helmut Buss, Mame Diagne, Kentaro Kanyomozi, James Lee, Judit Revesz*



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*



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

UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS and UN WOMEN

304 East 45th Street, 6th Floor

New York, NY 10017

Tel: +1 646 781 4083

Fax: +1 212 906 6281

[ombudsmediation@fpombudsman.org](mailto:ombudsmediation@fpombudsman.org)

[www.un.org/en/ombudsman](http://www.un.org/en/ombudsman)