

Guidance for Managers

Situations of Sexual Harassment

Purpose and Scope

Managers, by virtue of their positions of leadership, are accountable for acting as role models, and for creating a safe, respectful and harmonious working environment, free of fear, intimidation, hostility, and offence.

Sexual harassment is prohibited conduct in the workplace and in connection with work. It is unacceptable and must be eradicated from the UN workplace. All UN system personnel are required to uphold the highest standards of conduct.

This checklist aims to support managers in fulfilling their responsibilities to foster and promote a work environment and culture that prevents and responds to sexual harassment in their respective

teams and offices, in line with a victim/survivor centered approach, placing the victim/survivor's needs, rights, dignity, and well-being at the center of any intervention. This checklist does not amend or replace the organization's staff regulations, rules, or administrative issuances.

Managers should consult with the Victim Care Team on a victim centred approach in relation to situations of sexual harassment. Managers should inform colleagues about the support available from the Victim Care Team, who can provide information on the resolution options available.

01

Starting an assignment: Preparation and Learning

- I have **completed the mandatory e-learning training** [United to Respect: Preventing Sexual Harassment and Other Prohibited Conduct and on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#).
- I have read the [UNHCR Policy on Addressing Sexual Misconduct](#) and am aware of my role, accountabilities and authorities in line with this policy (in particular paras. 8.2 and 8.3). Sexual harassment constitutes misconduct and may be reported to the Inspector General's Office for appropriate action, if the victim wishes to do so.
- I have read the [Policy on a Victim-Centred Approach in UNHCR's response to Sexual Misconduct](#), as well as the UN-wide [Victim-centered Approach to Sexual Harassment for the United Nations](#) and the [IASC Definition & Principles of a Victim/Survivor Centered Approach](#), and am committed to operationalize these principles through my work.
- I am **familiar** with the [Victim Care Team](#) which offers psychosocial support, guidance, and accompaniment to colleagues who have experienced sexual harassment and am aware that I am expected to contact this team if sexual harassment is brought to my attention as a manager.
- I'm aware of the resources available to me on [UNHCR's intranet pages on PSEA/SH](#) and on the [UN System-wide Knowledge Hub on addressing Sexual Harassment](#).
- **I have consulted my predecessor and/or senior management**, as applicable, and with due respect for confidentiality, about any challenges relating to the working environment in the office, and any risks and measures to be taken to support a harmonious workplace.

02

During an assignment: Promoting Leadership and Strengthening Organizational Culture

- **I act as a role model** in my personal and professional conduct and uphold the highest standards of conduct.
- **At least twice per year, I remind personnel under my supervision of the expected standards** of conduct related to sexual harassment and make them aware of available resources, including the UNHCR Victim Care Team, and [available reporting channels](#).
- I advise my team about the **options available to address instances of sexual harassment**, as outlined in [UNHCR Policy on Addressing Sexual Misconduct](#) para. 6.9, highlighting *in particular* the choice of the victim on the preferred resolution pathway and the support made available through the [UNHCR Victim Care Team](#).
- **I promote and clearly communicate** the relevant organizational policies, facilitate open dialogue, put up posters, and explain the victim/survivor-centered approach and [protection from retaliation](#).
- **I actively look out for signs of sexual harassment**, such as inappropriate comments, sexist jokes, comments about bodily appearance or sexual experiences, inappropriate touching, or showing or discussing pornographic materials, **and promptly and appropriately address these**, in consultation [with relevant colleagues](#), reiterating zero tolerance.
- **I am aware of risk factors** that contribute to an environment conducive to sexual harassment [ex: gender disparity; cultural norms and barriers to reporting; personnel dispersed across field/satellite offices; emergency response situations; social events involving alcohol; high turnover of personnel; shared accommodation; mission travel; lack of knowledge about the organization's policies, reporting and resolution procedures] **and take action to mitigate these**.

- **I am aware of the consequences** of sexual harassment [ex: mental health and wellbeing issues; damage to employee morale; decreasing social and professional functioning; higher than usual sick or leave days; impact on performance; withdrawal from team engagements and communication, among others], and **actively monitor the office environment**, in consultation with [relevant colleagues](#).
- **I take concrete steps to create an inclusive environment**, and I model respectful and open communication and behavior within my team and office, promoting a workplace where all personnel feel psychologically safe and encouraged to speak up.
- **I regularly check-in with my team**, including one-on-one, to build rapport and trust, and to strengthen collaboration. I address any gossiping, rumors and similar behaviors in the team.
- **I discuss with my team the results of relevant staff surveys**, and work in an inclusive manner towards implementing measures to address areas of concern.
- Within my delegated authority and available resources, **I seek to ensure that resources** (human and/or financial) are allocated for safeguarding against sexual harassment in the workplace.
- I follow-up and ensure that **all personnel have completed the mandatory e-learning** [United to Respect: Preventing Sexual Harassment and Other Prohibited Conduct and on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) and participate in the annual [Code of Conduct sessions](#).
- I promote the **rollout of the UNHCR PSEA/SH Learning Package** and other non-mandatory learning which fosters an organizational culture that is free from sexual harassment and equips all personnel with the skills and knowledge to become active bystanders.
- I share the [UN Code of Conduct to Prevent Harassment, including Sexual Harassment, at UN System Events](#) with participants at all conferences/events organized by my team, and I request them to respect the same during their interactions with my organization.

03

Witnessing sexual harassment in the workplace

- **I intervene promptly, calmly and assertively** to address inappropriate behavior and reiterate the required standards of conduct.
- I seek confidential advice from the [Victim Care Team](#) before acting, to ensure that my response is appropriate and in line with a victim-centred approach and consistent with the [UNHCR Policy on Addressing Sexual Misconduct](#), in particular paras. 6.9 to 6.12, noting that the preferred resolution pathway is the victim's choice.
- **I take immediate action** to provide information on available resources regarding access to specialized support, counselling, informal reporting, formal reporting, and protection against retaliation, as relevant (see below for further details).
- **I prioritize and follow-up in a timely manner** on such events on a bilateral basis with the victim/survivor and/or alleged perpetrator, as appropriate.
- **I seek out additional guidance** and support, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of the victim/survivor(s), if appropriate, from the [Victim Care Team](#).

When an individual approaches me to discuss sexual harassment in the workplace

- **I listen actively, demonstrate empathy and take appropriate action**, in line with a victim/survivor-centered approach. I do not express personal opinions or biases or undermine or minimize the experience.
- **I mirror the language** that the victim/survivor/witness used to convey their experience (e.g. if he/she says, "*It felt uncomfortable*", I say "*I understand that it felt uncomfortable*".)
- I reassure the colleague **that all matters involving sexual harassment**, including online sexual harassment, are taken seriously and handled in accordance with the [Policy on Addressing Sexual Misconduct](#).
- I reassure the colleague that retaliation for reporting or cooperating in an investigation is strictly prohibited, and that UNHCR has measures in place to protect personnel from such actions. I ensure the colleague is aware of **UNHCR's Administrative Instruction on Protection against Retaliation** and the support and guidance provided by [the Ethics Office](#) in relation to this.
- **I provide the victim/survivor or witness with information** on [UNHCR's Victim Care Team](#) and ensure they are aware of all formal and informal resolution pathways available, including:
 - to disclose to the Victim Care Team, who will provide advice on support and pathways;
 - to contact the [IGO](#) for an informal consultation on the formal process;
 - to submit a [formal report to the IGO](#) (which may lead to an investigation);
 - to seek resolution outside the formal process (including through the Office of the [Ombudsperson and Mediator](#) or local resolution through management);
 - to report to a manager;
 - to report to the [SpeakUp Helpline](#);
 - to record an incident on UNHCR's [NotOnlyMe tool](#) which is confidential and does not automatically trigger a formal complaint.
- If the victim/survivor or witness refers to **documents or other that may help substantiating the allegations** (e.g. WhatsApp messages), I advise them not to delete these and to keep an additional copy, if possible. I also advise the victim/survivor/witness to safely document the incident for themselves, including any details they may not have shared. I advise that the NotOnlyMe platform is a safe and secure place to document the incident(s) and store any documents.
- **I don't gather more details than the victim/survivor or witness may feel comfortable sharing**. I document the allegations brought to my attention by keeping secure and contemporaneous notes.
- I understand that my role as a manager is **not to investigate** but to listen and facilitate access to the appropriate channels and resources.
- **I do not make promises** that I cannot keep.
- **I contact UNHCR's Victim Care Team to seek advice** and guidance and to coordinate the victim's preferred way of accessing support and addressing their needs. I am aware I can get advice from the Victim Care Team without sharing confidential details.
- If the victim/survivor or witness **does not want to raise a formal complaint**, I will act in accordance with the [Policy on a Victim-Centred Approach in UNHCR's response to Sexual Misconduct](#). I will still **seek confidential guidance** from [UNHCR's Victim Care Team](#).
- **I do not approach the alleged perpetrator** about the incident without the explicit consent of the victim/survivor. I support as a mediator *only* if explicitly requested by the victim/survivor, and as appropriate, depending on the severity of the conduct.

- **I monitor the situation** and confidentially check-in with the victim/survivor or witness regularly, if they wish, to identify any change in the situation, any support which may be required, or measures that need to be implemented.
- I collaborate with the responsible official (i.e., Representative, Head of office, DPM, Ethics Office, LAS, IGO, the Victim Care Team or FSS) to implement timely **interim measures, workplace accommodations or adjustments**, as may be appropriate to ensure the safety and security of the victim/survivor.



Note: Victims/survivors who have been exposed to a traumatic experience may require **urgent assistance**. If immediate psychological or medical support is needed, victims/survivors must be counseled on existing services and encouraged to avail themselves of the support as soon as possible. Managers should urgently and confidentially implement the Critical Incident SOP to ensure appropriate steps are taken in line with the victim/survivor centered approach.

05

Restoring the workplace environment after sexual harassment has occurred

- **I seek advice** from the [Victim Care Team](#) on applying a victim/survivor-centred approach and ensuring adequate measures are in place to create a work environment free from sexual harassment and retaliation, rebuilding trust and fostering long-term culture change.
- **I conduct regular and as-needed “check-in” meetings with the** victim/survivor/witness, to see how things are going.
- **I continue to ensure** respect for confidentiality.
- **I remind personnel** that everyone plays a role in maintaining a harassment-free workplace.

06

When finishing the assignment

- **I inform** my successor and deputy about this Guide for Managers.
- **I inform** my successor about any challenges in the working environment in the office, risks and measures taken to ensure a harmonious workplace, while respecting confidentiality.
- **I inform my successor and manager about any pending actions or measures** which remain outstanding, to ensure that all matters are dealt with as a priority and without interruption and to build on these efforts.

“Good management isn’t just hitting targets. Real leadership shows in the workplace you create — safe, respectful, and grounded in dignity. Preventing sexual harassment starts with you: lead with integrity, set clear standards, and model professional behaviour. That’s how you get every team member to bring their best. That’s the workplace we want to create.”

— Kelly T. Clements, Deputy High Commissioner

