

ANTI-BULLYING AND ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY



WOPEN

Shaping Practices Influencing
Policies Impacting Lives

WOPEN 2023

www.wopen.org



Women Peace Builders Network (WOPEN)

Motto: *“Love, Tolerance, Peace and Security”.*

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1. The Policy Statement

Women Peace Builders Network (WOPEN) is committed to providing a safe and respectful environment for all its workers, free from bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment. Every employee, contractor, volunteer and intern, is entitled to be treated with respect as an individual. Any unwelcome behavior, physical or verbal, or conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment is prohibited. All bullying and harassment is prohibited wherever it takes place, including in the workplace, during events, conferences, social events, business trips and training sessions. WOPEN will adopt a zero-tolerance approach for any form of harassment or bullying. Any allegation of harassment or bullying will be dealt with in a robust and timely manner with fairness and sensitivity. Any person found to have bullied or harassed another will face disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment. Actions such as these should be reported without any fear of retaliation. All complaints of bullying and harassment will be taken seriously and treated with respect and in confidence. This policy may be subject to change through resolution of the WOPEN General Assembly.

Page | 1

2. Definitions

2.1 Definition of Bullying

Bullying is behavior directed either against an individual or a group of individuals that creates a threatening or intimidating environment undermining the confidence and self esteem of the recipient(s). It could be an abuse or misuse of power that humiliates or injures the recipient(s). Examples of bullying may include:

- Repeated criticism of work without balancing this with positive feedback or potential solutions, criticizing in front of others, devaluing work or performance, blaming recipient for circumstances beyond their control.

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- Criticism that focuses on a personal characteristic rather than work performance.
- Exclusion or victimization.
- Criticizing a colleague to others in a way that encourages them to criticize.
- Aggressive behavior towards others, including unreasonable anger or shouting.
- Persistently setting objectives with impossible deadlines or unachievable tasks, persistently ignoring concerns regarding workload, stress and expectations, deliberately or excessively changing work hours, schedules and other agreed arrangements.
- Using unnecessary levels of excessive supervision and interfering with the small detail of work.
- Deliberately withholding work information or unreasonably blocking promotion or training opportunities.
- Gas lighting or other forms of psychological manipulation.
- Using knowledge about a person’s private life to negatively impact their work life.

The above is not exhaustive and can only be used as a guide for examples of bullying.

2.2 Definition of Harassment

Harassment means verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct, which meets the following three criteria:

- It is related to a person’s characteristics, whether they are actual or perceived which include: age, disability, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, caste, ethnicity, country/region of origin or residence, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and class or economic background.
- It is unwanted.
- Has the purpose or effect of violating that person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive work environment for that person.

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Bullying and harassment can often come together and can be indistinguishable. Examples of harassment can include any kind of behavior including:

- **Spoken or written words or abuse**
 - Any “jokes”, banter, insults, taunts or gibes which focus on personal or physical characteristics as defined above.
 - The general use of racist language or racist terminology, sexually explicit or provocative language or homophobic language.
 - Insulting or ridiculing the way someone dresses, speaks or behaves.
 - Unwelcome or offensive questions, remarks or suggestive comments about a protected characteristic.
- **Imagery**
 - Display or circulation of any offensive or pornographic material, graffiti or racist literature; or sexually suggestive pictures, objects or written materials
- **Physical Gestures**
 - Facial expressions
 - Persistent or unwanted attention or physical contact or similar.
 - Mimicry
 - Pranks
 - Excluding people because of a personal characteristic.
 - Other acts which affect a person’s surroundings or other physical behavior.

Page | 3

2.3 Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated. It includes situations where a person is asked to engage in sexual activity as a condition of that person’s employment, as well as situations which create an

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environment which is hostile, intimidating or humiliating for the recipient. Sexual harassment can involve one or more incidents, and actions constituting harassment may be physical, verbal and non-verbal. Examples of conduct or behavior which constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

Page | 4

Physical Conduct

- Unwelcome physical contact including patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, fondling, or inappropriate touching
- Physical violence, including sexual assault
- The use of job-related threats or rewards to solicit sexual favors.

Verbal Conduct

- Comments on a worker's appearance, age, private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories and jokes
- Sexual advances
- Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy
- Insults based on the sex of the worker
- Condescending or paternalistic remarks
- Sending sexually explicit messages (over phone/text messages, email, social media, etc.)

Non-Verbal Conduct

- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material
- Sexually-suggestive gestures
- Whistling

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Anyone can be subjected to sexual harassment, regardless of their sex and of the sex of the harasser. WOPEN recognizes that sexual harassment may also occur between people of the same sex. What matters is that the sexual conduct is unwanted and unwelcome by the person against whom the conduct is directed.

WOPEN recognizes that sexual harassment is often a manifestation of power relationships and regularly occurs within unequal relationships in the workplace, for example between manager or supervisor and worker.

Page | 5

2.4 Bystanders

Bystanders or witnesses to any of the behavior described above are encouraged to inform those subjected to the behavior about the steps they can take to address it according to this policy. Wopen recognizes that one of the results of bullying or harassment can be the inability of those who are subject to such behavior to recognize it. It is thus a moral responsibility of all staff, contractors, volunteers and interns to help create a supportive, safe workplace, and to call out bullying and harassment where they witness it.

3. Complaints Procedures

Anyone who is subject to bullying or harassment should, if possible, inform the alleged person that the conduct is unwanted and unwelcome. Wopen recognizes that bullying and harassment may occur in unequal relationships (i.e. between a supervisor and their supervisee) and that it may not be possible for the person that is subjected to the bullying or harassment to inform the alleged person. If a person subjected to bullying or harassment cannot directly approach an alleged person, they can approach one of the designated staff members responsible for receiving complaints of



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bullying and harassment (National Coordinator, Communication Officer, Program Officer) and/or one of the WOPEN Advisory Board members (information on Advisory Board members can be found on WOPEN website).

When a designated person receives a complaint of bullying or harassment, they will:

Page | 6

- Immediately record the dates, times and facts of the incident(s), including a brief description of the incident(s) by the complainant
- Ascertain the views of the complainant as to what outcome they want
- Ensure that the complainant understands the organization’s procedures for dealing with the complaint
- Discuss and agree the next steps: either informal or formal complaint, on the understanding that choosing to resolve the matter informally does not preclude the complainant from pursuing a formal complaint if they are not satisfied with the outcome
- Treat all cases of harassment or bullying with strict confidentiality.
- Keep a confidential record of all discussions
- Respect the choice of the complainant to determine course of action
- Ensure that the complainant knows that they can lodge the complaint outside of the organization through the relevant country/legal framework, where such possibilities exist

Throughout the complaints procedure, the complainant is entitled to be supported by a counsellor. An assessment on a case-by-case basis will be done to identify appropriate counseling options within or outside the network. Recognizing that a case-by-case approach may not be suitable to all situations, especially where counseling might be required before a complaint’s procedure is even initiated, WOPEN will endeavor to retain a counseling service, for example through an Employee Assistance Programme, to be available to employees, contractors, volunteers and interns.

In any case, WOPEN will ensure that training is provided to Advisory board members and/or members of the National Coordination to enable them to assist those subject to bullying and

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harassment. WOPEN recognizes that because bullying and harassment often occurs in unequal relationships within the workplace, those subject to it often feel that they cannot come forward. WOPEN understands the need to provide support in making complaints.

Page | 7

3.1 Informal Complaints Mechanism

If the complainant wishes to deal with the matter informally, the designated person will (subject to agreement of the complainant):

- Give an opportunity to the alleged person to respond to the complaint
- Ensure that the alleged person understands the complaints mechanism
- Facilitate discussion between both parties to achieve an informal resolution which is acceptable to the complainant, or refer the matter to a trained mediator within the organization, or a mutually agreed third party to resolve the matter
- Ensure that a confidential record is kept of what happens
- Ensure that the above is done speedily and at the maximum within 30 days of the complaint being made
- Follow up after the outcome of the complaints mechanism to ensure that the behavior has stopped.

It is also possible to make complaints anonymously. However, anonymous complaints limit the steps that the designated person receiving the complaints can undertake to remedy the situations, especially if the complaint does not include information about the remedy that the complainant is seeking. Nonetheless, anonymous complaints can be useful in establishing records of unwanted behavior while complainants are considering future steps to be taken.



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3.2 Formal Complaints Mechanism

If the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint or if the informal complaint mechanism has not led to a satisfactory outcome for the complainant, the formal complaint mechanism should be used to resolve the matter. The designated person (National Coordinator at national level and Regional Coordinator at regional level) who initially received the complaint will refer the matter to either the Communication Officer or the Program/Operation Officer (respectively at national and regional levels) or to any advisory board member to instigate a formal investigation. The Communication Officer or the Program/Operation Officer or any advisory board member may deal with the matter themselves, refer the matter to an internal or external investigator, or refer it to a committee of at least two others in accordance with this policy.

The person carrying out the investigation will:

- Interview the complainant and the alleged person separately
- Interview other relevant third parties separately,
- Assess whether or not the complaint of bullying or harassment should be upheld,
- Produce a report detailing the investigations, findings and any recommendations,
- Ensure that the above is done as quickly as possible and in any event within 30 days of the complaint being made,
- If the investigation concludes that the complaint should be upheld, the person carrying out the investigation shall make a formal recommendation to the Board of Directors on the appropriate remedy for the complainant, in consultation with them (i.e. an apology, a change to working arrangements, a promotion if the complainant was demoted as a result of the bullying or harassment, training for the alleged person, discipline, suspension, and dismissal).
- Follow up to ensure that the recommendations are implemented, that the behavior has stopped and that the complainant is satisfied with the outcome



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- If it cannot determine whether the complaint should be upheld, they may still make recommendations to ensure proper functioning of the workplace
- Keep a record of all actions taken
- Treat all cases with strict confidentiality, and ensure that the records concerning the matter are kept confidential

Page | 9

4. Sanctions, Disciplinary Measures, and Restorative Justice

Anyone who has been found to have bullied or harassed another person under the terms of this policy is liable to any of the following sanctions:

- verbal or written warning
- adverse performance evaluation
- reduction in wages
- transfer
- demotion
- administrative leave with pay
- suspension
- dismissal

The nature of the sanctions will depend on the gravity and extent of the bullying and harassment. Suitable deterrent sanctions will be applied to ensure that incidents of harassment are not treated as trivial. Certain serious cases, including physical violence, will result in immediate dismissal, and may lead to legal prosecution under the law of Cameroon or the country where the action took place.

Furthermore, Wopen recognizes the importance of restorative justice in cases where bullying or harassment has taken place. However, restorative justice processes should, where appropriate and desired, be established on a case-by-case basis and are therefore not defined in this policy.

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5. For those Being Bullied Or Harassed at Work

Individuals subject to bullying or harassment should refer to workplace bullying policy and complaints procedure above, keep a diary of the unwanted behavior, documenting everything that happens, including their own measures taken to try stopping it, if applicable. This information can help when making a complaint. Individuals should also consider getting support from trusted colleagues or contact support services, if appropriate (otherwise, local help services hotlines are available). If it feels safe to do so, individuals may choose to assert that the behavior is unwanted and not acceptable vis-à-vis the person concerned. Otherwise, they should seek advice from one of the designated persons to follow the informal or formal complaints mechanism, or from a colleague or manager. While this policy is intended to prevent such a situation to arise, it is possible that the unwanted behavior continues despite complaints, or that the individual subject to it does not feel safe to approach any of the designated persons named in this policy or any other WOPEN staff. In such a case they are encouraged to seek outside information and advice.

Page | 10

6. Implementation of this Policy

WOPEN National Coordination will ensure that this policy is disseminated to all staff, volunteers, interns, contractors, members at regional coordination, advisory board and supporters. It will be included in the organization's member handbook. All newly elected members or workers must acknowledge that they have read and understood the content of this policy (as standalone or as part of the Code of Ethics and Conduct as part of their induction into WOPEN. All levels of managers and supervisors are responsible for familiarizing themselves with this policy, and ensure the people they manage are fully aware of it. WOPEN will require all members or workers to attend a training/refresher course on the content of this policy and other relevant updates in the Code of



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Ethics and Conduct on a regular basis. Additionally, WOPEN will require management and workers to attend sensitivity and diversity trainings.

7. Monitoring And Evaluation

Page | 11

WOPEN recognizes the importance of monitoring this anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy and will ensure that it anonymously collects statistics and data as to how it is used and whether or not it is effective. Senior Management and those responsible for dealing with bullying and harassment cases will report to the Advisory Board (and, if adequate, other interested parties within WOPEN) on compliance with this policy, including the number of incidents, how they were dealt with, and any recommendations made. This will be done at the minimum on a yearly basis. As a result of this report, the organization will evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and make any changes needed.