



## Executive Director's Circular (Human Resources Division)

Date: 10 February 2022

Circular No.: OED2022/004

Revises:

Amends:

Supersedes: OED 2018/007

### PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO ABUSIVE CONDUCT

#### (Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Abuse of Authority, and Discrimination)

#### Purpose

1. WFP is committed to fostering protected working environments that are respectful and inclusive, affording all employees the opportunity to reach their fullest potential and permitting them to deliver the best possible results for all the people that WFP serves. WFP supervisors, managers and all other employees have a role to play in achieving this goal.
2. Consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, the FAO/WFP Staff Rules and Regulations, the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service,<sup>1</sup> the WFP Code of Conduct<sup>2</sup> and the WFP People Policy,<sup>3</sup> and through its values,<sup>4</sup> WFP takes a zero-tolerance approach to abusive conduct (as defined below). This means that if abusive conduct comes to the attention of the organization, it will be addressed as promptly, fairly and effectively as possible in accordance with this Circular. WFP employees shall also be protected for speaking up about such conduct as set out in this Circular, including in accordance with the Whistleblower Protection Policy.<sup>5</sup>
3. The purpose of this Circular is to set out: (i) the roles and responsibilities of the organization, its supervisors and managers, and other employees in ensuring respectful and inclusive working environments by preventing and responding to inappropriate and abusive conduct; (ii) how to speak up about concerns of inappropriate or abusive conduct; and (iii) the support available.

#### Application

4. This Circular applies to all WFP employees and to conduct occurring in the workplace or any way in connection with work for WFP, including, but not limited to, when commuting to and from work as well as when telecommuting, in or outside of the workplace, during or outside working hours (such as in social interactions), during work-related activities (such as travel, training or events).
5. Abusive conduct can be perpetrated by any person against any person irrespective of whether they are WFP employees. Action taken by the organization will depend on whether the affected

<sup>1</sup> Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, issued in WFP through Executive Director's Circular OED2013/021, 15 October 2013.

<sup>2</sup> WFP Code of Conduct, Executive Director's Circular OED2014/016, 20 October 2014.

<sup>3</sup> WFP People Policy, Executive Director's Circular OED2021/016, 27 August 2021.

<sup>4</sup> WFP values are Integrity, Collaboration, Commitment, Humanity and Inclusion. See: <https://newgo.wfp.org/documents/wfp-values>.

<sup>5</sup> Protection against Retaliation Policy (or Whistleblower Protection Policy), Executive Director's Circular OED2020/022, 31 December 2020.

person and/or the alleged perpetrator are WFP employees, current or former, or not.<sup>6</sup>

## Definitions

6. For the purposes of this Circular:

- (i) **“Abusive conduct”** is the generic term to refer to abuse of authority, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual harassment, which are forms of misconduct that can be addressed through informal resolution, managerial intervention and/or the formal process as set out in paragraphs 15-45;
- (ii) **“Inappropriate conduct”** is conduct which may not meet the definition of abusive conduct or rise to the level of abusive conduct but is nonetheless inconsistent with the principles set forth in this Circular. It can be addressed through informal resolution and/or management intervention as set out in paragraphs 19-26;
- (iii) **“Abuse of authority”** is the improper use of a position of influence, power or authority against another person. This is particularly serious when a person uses their influence, power or authority to improperly influence the career, performance assessment or employment conditions of another, such as their appointment, assignment, contract renewal, professional development or promotion. Abuse of authority may also manifest itself through discrimination, harassment or sexual harassment and include acts of reprisal and conduct that creates a hostile or offensive work environment, such as the use of intimidation, threats, blackmail or coercion.

Examples of abuse of authority include, but are not limited to:

- Requesting that a supervisee provide a personal service not related to work, such as running errands of a personal nature for the supervisor;
- Coercing a person not to report or raise concerns about potential breaches of standards of conduct or ethical obligations;
- Manipulating the nature of a person’s work in order to undermine them, such as by inequitably and unjustifiably overloading them with work, inappropriately withholding information, setting objectives with unreasonable or impossible deadlines or repeatedly assigning unachievable, meaningless or trivial tasks;
- Inconsistent management style where some individuals are unjustifiably and demonstrably favoured over others; and
- Arbitrarily demanding tasks to be undertaken outside of usual working hours or unjustifiably withholding or delaying leave approval.

Supervisors and managers are expected to manage performance at all times in a respectful and constructive manner and make fair decisions on work-related matters, such as distribution of functions, restructuring of a unit, leave or training opportunities. This may result in critical comments on work performance, identification of areas for improvement, as well as contentious decisions. While these actions can result in conflict, such actions are not by themselves considered abusive unless they take the form of abusive conduct (e.g., performance concerns communicated in an offensive or humiliating manner). Disagreements on performance matters will normally be addressed in the framework applicable to performance management.

---

<sup>6</sup> E.g., where the affected person is a WFP employee, support such as through Staff Counselling is available regardless of whether the alleged perpetrator is a WFP employee. Similarly, where the alleged perpetrator is a WFP employee, informal resolution, managerial intervention and/or the formal process can proceed regardless of whether the affected person is a WFP employee.

- (iv) **“Discrimination”** is any unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on a person’s race, ethnicity or ethnic background, nationality or national origin, gender, sexual orientation or gender expression or identity, physical or mental disability and religious beliefs or other similar actual or perceived characteristic or trait. Discrimination usually includes actions or omissions, direct or indirect, based on distinctions or prejudices which have the purpose or effect of treating individuals or groups inequitably or unjustly. Discrimination may be an isolated event affecting one person or a group of persons similarly situated. Discrimination can occur also when the alleged perpetrator and the affected person share the same actual or perceived characteristic, such as the same race.

Examples of discrimination include, but are not limited to:

- Denying professional development opportunities, transfers and promotions because of a person’s race or ethnicity;
- Not renewing the contract of an employee who is medically fit to work because they have a disability;
- Not hiring a woman who meets the qualifications required to perform the tasks for a position only because that position is traditionally or more frequently filled by a man, or vice versa;

- (v) **“Harassment”** is any unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation. In assessing the reasonableness of expectations or perceptions, the perspective of the affected person shall be considered. Harassment: (i) does not have to be intentional or deliberate; (ii) may take the form of words, gestures or actions which tend to annoy, distress, threaten, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, humiliate or embarrass another; (iii) may involve any conduct of a verbal (including hard copy and electronic communications), non-verbal or physical nature; (iv) may be the cumulative effect of a series of actions, which often, in isolation, might not be viewed as harassment; and (v) is particularly egregious if based on a person’s race, ethnicity or ethnic background, nationality or national origin, gender, sexual orientation or gender expression or identity, physical or mental disability and religious beliefs or other similar actual or perceived characteristic or trait.

Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Use of unwelcome nicknames, gestures, facial expressions and physical contact;
- Making it particularly difficult for another person to do their job by deliberately and improperly withholding essential information;
- Making derogatory or demeaning comments or jokes about someone’s gender, sexual orientation or race;
- Shouting, swearing or displaying aggressive behaviour, including oral or written threats or threatening physical behaviour, such as by “bullying” someone or unreasonably berating their work orally or in writing (“*you’re useless, can’t you get it right?*”);
- Attempted or actual physical violence, such as hitting, pushing, kicking or throwing objects;

- (vi) **“Sexual harassment”** is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or perceived to cause offense or humiliation. In assessing the reasonableness of expectations or perceptions, the perspective of the person who is affected by the conduct shall be considered. Sexual harassment: (i) does not have to be intentional or deliberate; (ii) may involve any conduct of a verbal (including hard

copy and electronic communications), non-verbal or physical nature (up to and including sexual assault); (iii) while frequently involving a pattern of conduct, may take the form of a single incident; (iv) may or may not be a conduct prohibited under national criminal laws or other regulations or provisions existing in the location where the conduct occurs; and (v) may occur between persons of the same or different genders, and individuals of any gender or sexual orientation can be either the affected persons or the alleged perpetrators. Substance and/or drug use, prior relationship or sexual involvement do not lessen the seriousness of such conduct.

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Sending sexually suggestive communications, such as hard copy or electronic text messages (e.g., by email, instant messaging service or social media platform), images, audio recordings or videos;
  - Telling sexual anecdotes or jokes or asking questions about sexual preferences or habits;
  - Making sexual comments about appearance, clothing or body parts;
  - Asking a person for unwelcome dates repeatedly or asking for sex;
  - Making inappropriate sexual gestures or staring;
  - Touching, including kissing, fondling, pinching, patting, rubbing, or purposefully brushing up against another person or touching oneself sexually for others to view;
  - Rape and any other forms of attempted or actual sexual assault;
- (vii) **“Affected person”** is the person experiencing the possibly inappropriate or abusive conduct;
- (viii) **“Alleged perpetrator”** is the person possibly responsible of inappropriate or abusive conduct;
- (ix) **“Witness”** is any person observing the possibly inappropriate or abusive conduct or being informed of it; the witness can also be an affected person;
- (x) **“WFP employee”** means any individual employed by WFP, including but not limited to international and national professional staff members, general service staff members, persons engaged on Service Contracts and Special Service Agreements, short-term personnel (consultants and casual labourers), volunteers and interns;
- (xi) **“ClearCheck”** is a United Nations (UN) system-wide database for screening UN system personnel for sexual harassment, as set out in the “Human Resources” Manual (HR Manual) as amended from time to time.<sup>7</sup>

### **Roles and responsibilities**

7. WFP and each WFP employee have a role to play in promoting respectful and inclusive work environments.

#### ***Obligations of WFP***

8. The organization shall take appropriate measures to prevent and respond to inappropriate and abusive conduct by:
- (i) Making available avenues for speaking up about concerns of inappropriate or abusive conduct and obtaining support as set out in paragraphs 15-45;
  - (ii) Supporting WFP employees, with dedicated focus on supervisors and managers, in

---

<sup>7</sup> As at the date of issuance of this Circular, Section VIII.1.5.3 of the HR Manual.

meeting their obligations under this Circular, including by providing training, updated guidance material and other awareness-raising initiatives;

- (iii) Acting promptly and consistently once an affected person or witness has spoken up by taking action through informal resolution, management intervention and/or the formal process, as well as considering interim protective measures, if and as appropriate, regardless of the function, seniority, length of service or contractual status of the alleged perpetrator or of the affected person;
- (iv) Applying due diligence and implementing measures to minimize the risk of employment of individuals with a record of behaviour that is deemed incompatible with service with WFP, including through the implementation of adequate reference checks, internal disciplinary records' screening and ClearCheck verifications.
- (v) Adopting a centralized, coordinated, multidisciplinary and confidential approach to addressing abusive conduct through the Inter-disciplinary Committee (IC) and/or other organizational arrangements made from time to time. The terms of reference of the IC are outlined in Annex II.

#### ***Obligations of WFP employees***

- 9. Each WFP employee shall contribute to creating respectful and inclusive work environments by:
  - (i) Demonstrating respect and embracing inclusiveness in their interactions with others and not engaging in, or condoning, inappropriate or abusive conduct;
  - (ii) Familiarizing themselves with this Circular by completing mandatory training and engaging with guidance materials and awareness-raising initiatives related to this Circular;
  - (iii) Considering speaking up about concerns of inappropriate or abusive conduct as soon as possible as outlined in paragraphs 15-45 below;
  - (iv) Cooperating fully with any formal process as outlined in paragraphs 27-36 below;
  - (v) Fully respecting the confidentiality of informal resolution, management intervention and/or the formal process, including after their conclusion;
  - (vi) Behaving at all times with integrity and good faith in respect of this Circular. Speaking up without genuine belief that inappropriate or abusive conduct may have occurred, or speaking up deliberately knowing that inappropriate or abuse conduct did not occur are not acceptable.
- 10. Failure on the part of a WFP employee to fulfill their obligations under this Circular may be considered a breach of duty leading to administrative or disciplinary action. Any such action shall take into account the heightened responsibilities and standards of conduct expected of managers and supervisors.
- 11. Consensual intimate relationships between WFP employees are not appropriate where: (i) one takes or reviews administrative decisions concerning the other; (ii) one is a direct subordinate in reporting/line of authority to the other; or (iii) either or both is in a position in which a conflict of interest has arisen or could potentially arise from the relationship. The parties to any such relationship should disclose the matter to the Ethics Office. Disclosures to the Ethics Office are kept confidential except to the extent required to address conflicts of interest (actual, perceived or potential) and/or possible abusive conduct.

#### ***Additional obligations of WFP supervisors and managers***

- 12. Supervisors and managers shall be responsible, in addition to the obligations applicable to all WFP employees, to provide protected, respectful and inclusive work environments by:

#### ***Prevention***

- (i) Leading by example in observing the expected standards of conduct, as set out in this Circular;
- (ii) Ensuring that WFP employees under their supervision or management are treated in a fair, respectful and inclusive manner;
- (iii) Making WFP employees under their supervision or management aware of this Circular, the expected standards of conduct and their role in creating respectful and inclusive workplaces;
- (iv) Encouraging WFP employees under their supervision or management to speak up freely, including by ensuring psychological safety in their teams;<sup>8</sup>

*Response*

- (v) Promptly and fairly responding to concerns of inappropriate or abusive conduct that come to their attention, in accordance with paragraphs 23-26 below.
13. In addition, WFP Directors are required to certify in their annual assurance statement to the Executive Director their proactive engagement in preventing and responding to abusive conduct.
  14. Promotion of employees to managerial and supervisory positions should take into account whether they have contributed to and, where relevant, promoted safe, respectful and inclusive work environments.

**Avenues for speaking up**

15. WFP employees who are affected persons or witnesses should speak up about inappropriate and abusive conduct. This can be done through:
  - (i) Informal resolution: which focuses on understanding the concerns of the affected person and the other parties involved and supporting them in making adjustments and working effectively together;
  - (ii) Management intervention: which consists of a supervisor, manager and/or HR officer: listening and supporting the affected person or witness; addressing concerns as deemed appropriate through performance management; cautioning the alleged perpetrator; monitoring the workplace to prevent reoccurrence; and/or other administrative measures.
  - (iii) Formal process: which involves a fact-finding investigation conducted by the Office of Inspections and Investigations (OIGI) followed, if warranted, by administrative and disciplinary action, as appropriate.
16. WFP employees are strongly encouraged to speak up as soon as possible as early action can prevent situations from escalating. To facilitate speaking up and the follow-up on concerns, affected persons and witnesses are encouraged to keep a detailed description of concerns of inappropriate or abusive conduct, including where and when it possibly occurred, as well as, if available, supporting evidence and names of potential witnesses. The absence of evidence and witnesses should not discourage speaking up in good faith.
17. The remainder of this section sets out in further detail the avenues for speaking up, which are summarized in an infographic in Annex 1.
18. In cases involving physical harm, WFP employees are also encouraged to seek immediate medical attention including through WFP's Medical Service and psychological support, including

---

<sup>8</sup> Psychological safety is a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking and that one will not be subject to inappropriate or abusive conduct for speaking up about such conduct or sharing ideas, questions or mistakes.

through WFP's Staff Counselling Service, and may contact the Critical Incident Management Hotline<sup>9</sup> for further guidance and support. WFP will respond to critical incidents, including matters involving sexual assault or rape, in accordance with administrative issuances in place at the relevant time.

### ***Informal resolution***

19. Affected persons and witnesses may seek informal resolution in different ways according to what they feel is comfortable and safe for them: (i) by speaking directly to the alleged perpetrator; and/or (ii) by seeking resolution with the assistance of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services (OBD).

#### *(a) Speaking directly to the alleged perpetrator*

20. Affected persons or witnesses may choose to communicate directly with the alleged perpetrator about their concerns of inappropriate or abusive conduct and ask for such conduct to stop.
21. This approach may be particularly effective in situations of inappropriate conduct or where the alleged perpetrator may not be aware of the negative impact of their behaviour on others.

#### *(b) Resolution through the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services*

22. OBD provides a safe, confidential, and off-the-record place to help any employee navigate and respond to their situation. In addition, OBD offers support through one or more of the following actions:

- (i) Review possible inappropriate or abusive conduct and identify adequate responses with affected persons, witnesses, managers or supervisors who consult OBD before approaching the alleged perpetrator; and,

Subject to the consent of the affected person and with due consideration of the nature of the conduct:

- (ii) Informally contact the alleged perpetrator or other parties involved to obtain or provide information about the situation and identify and review ways in which it might be resolved;
- (iii) Lead a facilitated conversation between the concerned parties with the aim to foster understanding and restore work relationships;
- (iv) Mediate in accordance with the Executive Director's Circular on Mediation Services.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Management intervention through a supervisor, manager and/or HR officer***

23. Affected persons or witnesses may raise concerns of inappropriate or abusive conduct with management by choosing to speak up with either of the following:
  - (i) Their supervisor or a manager. If the matter involves a supervisor, the supervisor's supervisor or senior management in the relevant location, including the Regional Director, Country Director or HQ Divisional Director, may be the most appropriate person to speak with;
  - (ii) An HR officer at the relevant Regional Bureau or Country Office; and/or, wherever they might be located,
  - (iii) The Staff Relations Branch, Human Resources Division (HRM Staff Relations).
24. Management shall promptly and fairly respond to possible inappropriate or abusive conduct that comes to its attention by taking the following actions:

---

<sup>9</sup> Critical Incident Management Hotline, which operates 24/7, at VSAT 1301- 3333 or +39-06-6513-3333.

<sup>10</sup> Mediation Services, Executive Director's Circular OED2012/008, 25 July 2012.

- (i) Listen to the affected person and/or witness and other parties involved to obtain information about the concerns while avoiding offering personal opinions and speculating on the facts;
  - (ii) Support the affected person and/or witness by:
    - a. informing them of the available support as set out in paragraphs 22 and 46-51, as well as referring them to any available guidance material on this Circular;
    - b. initiating interim protective measures as appropriate<sup>11</sup>.
  - (iii) Address the concerns, as appropriate and where reasonable, for example by:
    - a. cautioning the alleged perpetrator about the nature of the possible conduct and reminding them that it would be inconsistent with the present Circular;
    - b. (for supervisors and managers only) through active supervision such as performance management and the use of remedial measures, including training and/or coaching. Performance management includes general discussions throughout the year and the completion of annual performance management assessments;
    - c. (for HR officers only) by involving and supporting, as appropriate, the supervisor or manager of the alleged perpetrator so that they can address the conduct;
  - (iv) Monitor the workplace environment by following up with the affected person and/or witnesses. With due regard to confidentiality, outgoing supervisors, managers or HR officers should inform their successor about any ongoing matters, actions taken and issues of which to be mindful.
25. The views of the affected person should be sought before action is taken. However, there may be instances where the supervisor, manager and/or HR officer, considering relevant circumstances of the case, such as the severity of the possible conduct and its potential impact on WFP and its employees, should anyway take action to ensure a response consistent with this Circular.
26. In fulfilling their responsibilities under this section, supervisors and managers may seek advice and guidance from: (i) HR officers at the relevant Regional Bureau or Country Office and/or from HRM Staff Relations; and (ii), in respect of any related concerns of retaliation under the Whistleblower Protection Policy, from the Ethics Office.

***The formal process***

*(a) Reporting to the Office of Inspections and Investigations (OIGI)*

27. Any person, including without limitation former WFP employees, may formally report allegations of abusive conduct to OIGI at any time after an incident has occurred, including without limitation where informal resolution and/or managerial intervention is not desired or appropriate or has been unsuccessful.
28. Reporting persons may decide to remain anonymous but are strongly encouraged to identify themselves and to report as early as possible after an incident, as this may significantly contribute to OIGI's ability to investigate. In accordance with the principles of due process, details of reports and interviews, including with affected persons or witnesses, may be shared with the alleged perpetrator during the course of an investigation and any related disciplinary process.
29. Formal reports are submitted to OIGI through any of the options listed on the OIG page of the

---

<sup>11</sup> See paragraphs 52-58 of this Circular.



WFP intranet site.<sup>12</sup> The report should be as detailed as possible and include any relevant documentation. Any formal report of allegations of abusive conduct shall be acknowledged by OIGI.

30. OIGI will conduct a preliminary assessment of a formal report to decide whether to initiate a formal investigation into the alleged abusive conduct. The decision to open a formal investigation remains with OIGI in accordance with the OIGI Investigation Guidelines and other applicable instruments. During the preliminary assessment, OIGI may seek the views of the affected person.
31. The preliminary assessment of a formal report may result in: (i) case closure; (ii) referral to another WFP office for consideration of whether informal resolution and/or management intervention would be appropriate; (iii) referral to another UN agency or a third party; (iv) suspension of the matter awaiting receipt of information/outcomes of investigations by others; and/or (v) the opening of an investigation.
32. OIGI has the authority to open an investigation into allegations of abusive conduct at its own initiative, including without reference to a specific written or verbal report, following consultation with the affected person, and with due regard to the suitability of informal resolution and/or managerial intervention.

*(b) Investigation*

33. Where an investigation is initiated, it will be conducted in accordance with the OIGI Investigation Guidelines and other applicable instruments.
34. If, while concluding the investigation, the allegations do not appear to be supported by factual evidence, OIGI will inform the affected person of its intention to close the case and the basis for the proposed action and provide the affected person with a final opportunity to submit any new and/or additional relevant information that may assist OIGI in its determination of the facts.
35. OIGI will inform the alleged perpetrator (if they were made aware of the investigation) and the affected person of the completion of the investigation in line with the OIGI Investigation Guidelines. The provision of any such information shall respect confidentiality as applicable.
36. Reports of abusive conduct by a WFP employee that are knowingly false constitute misconduct.

*(c) Disciplinary Process*

37. If, based on the review of OIGI's investigation report, it is considered that the evidence gathered and analysed warrants the initiation of a disciplinary process or review, WFP will proceed in accordance with the applicable procedures under the relevant regulations and rules, including the HR Manual Chapter VIII.1 and other instruments.
38. WFP's commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to abusive conduct means that action will always be taken if the allegations are confirmed following a disciplinary process, including through the imposition of appropriate administrative and/or disciplinary measures on the perpetrator, which may lead to their separation from service.
39. In determining the appropriate measure, a case-by-case analysis will be conducted, taking into account factors such as, but not limited to:
  - (i) The type of abusive conduct;
  - (ii) The seniority and function of the alleged perpetrator and the existence of a hierarchical or supervisory relationship with the affected person;
  - (iii) Prior substantiated instances of misconduct by the alleged perpetrator; and
  - (iv) The severity of the impact of the abusive conduct on the affected person.

---

<sup>12</sup> <http://newgo.wfp.org/how-do-i-report-an-act-of-misconduct>. Email: [InvestigationsLine@wfp.org](mailto:InvestigationsLine@wfp.org).

40. In addition to the measures provided for in the HR Manual, the alleged perpetrator may be the subject of other administrative actions, such as required training, a change of functions or responsibilities or coaching.
41. The Director, HRM will keep the affected person and the alleged perpetrator informed at key stages during the disciplinary process. The provision of any such information shall respect confidentiality as applicable.
42. Where there is credible evidence of criminal activity, WFP can refer the matter to the relevant national authorities for consideration of criminal investigation in consultation with the Legal Office and normally upon recommendation from the Inspector General, taking into account the specific circumstances of the case, such as the views of the affected person and the potential consequences of referral on that person. Concerns of criminal conduct may, in any case, be reported directly to national authorities by an affected person.

*(d) Workplace restoration*

43. Once the formal process is completed, and with due regard to its outcome and confidentiality concerns, appropriate measures may be taken with respect to the affected person or alleged perpetrator to ensure workplace restoration.
44. OBD, the Staff Counsellor and HR officers may assist in workplace restoration efforts including through reintegration of the affected person or alleged perpetrator, where they are WFP employees, into the workplace.
45. In addition, WFP shall review, as appropriate, adverse administrative actions that are confirmed to have been part or a direct consequence of abusive conduct.

**Support**

46. WFP employees, including affected persons, are entitled to reasonable and appropriate support at different stages, including after an incident of possible inappropriate or abusive conduct, during any informal resolution, management intervention or the formal process, and following the conclusion thereof, as set out below.

*(a) Support person*

47. The affected person and the alleged perpetrator have the right to be accompanied by a colleague, staff representative, family member or trusted friend (support person) of their choice for emotional support during the key stages of informal resolution or the formal process, such as an investigation interview, as well as in management intervention where appropriate. The support person must be readily available and abide by WFP's rules on confidentiality and must not be a witness nor involved in any investigation, or otherwise subject to a potential conflict of interest. The support person must not interrupt, prevent, delay or interfere the informal resolution, the formal process and, where involved, the management intervention.

*(b) Support mechanisms*

48. All WFP employees may seek support and advice from the following WFP resources: (i) the Staff Counselling Service; (ii) the Medical Service; (iii) the Ethics Office (also for matters related to retaliation under the Whistleblower Protection Policy as outlined in paragraph 52 below); (iv) a security officer; (v) a representative of the Professional Staff Association (PSA) or of the FAO/WFP Union of General Service Staff (UGSS); and (vi) a respectful workplace adviser (RWA).
49. All WFP employees and former employees are encouraged to reach out to the Staff Counselling Service to access free psychosocial support in person, by telephone or through other electronic means throughout any informal resolution, managerial intervention or formal process. All consultations with the Staff Counsellor are confidential.
50. All WFP employees can reach out to a security officer in cases of abusive conduct involving safety and security concerns.
51. Annex III sets out further information regarding the above support mechanisms at WFP with a

description of the role each function plays and its contact details.

*(c) Interim protective measures*

52. WFP does not tolerate retaliation or reprisals in any form. Retaliation as defined and addressed through the Whistleblower Protection Policy may manifest itself, among others, through forms of abusive conduct. Protection against retaliation applies when direct or indirect detrimental action has been recommended, threatened or taken toward a WFP employee<sup>13</sup> because that employee, in good faith, reports alleged wrongdoing or misconduct through the established mechanisms, or cooperates with a duly authorized audit, inspection, investigation, proactive integrity reviews or evaluation. If established, retaliation constitutes a separate form of misconduct. Other forms of retaliatory acts or reprisals that do not meet the definition of retaliation under the Whistleblower Protection Policy, may be instances of abusive conduct and addressed under this Circular.
53. During informal resolution, management intervention or the formal process, a supervisor or manager, Country or Regional Director, HQ Divisional Director, or Director, HRM, in accordance with their respective delegation of authority, may accordingly take interim protective measures as appropriate to: (i) protect the safety, security and well-being of the individuals concerned; (ii) protect the integrity of any investigation; (iii) prevent the occurrence or repetition of possible retaliation or abusive conduct; and (iv) protect the interests of WFP, including the effective functioning of an office. Such interim protective measures shall be taken promptly, especially for allegations of sexual harassment. Where applicable, OIGI or the informal resolution channel should be informed of measures taken.
54. Interim protective measures may be informed by a recommendation of, among others, the IC or any of its members, particularly in matters that are particularly egregious in nature or may jeopardize WFP's reputation.
55. Interim protective measures may include, without limitation:
  - (i) Physical separation of the alleged perpetrator and the affected person;
  - (ii) Assignment of alternative duties or reporting lines;
  - (iii) Instituting flexible working arrangements;
  - (iv) Consideration of special leave, annual leave or rest and recuperation (R&R) arrangements; and
  - (v) Placement of the alleged perpetrator on suspension pending completion of the investigation and/or disciplinary process in accordance with HR Manual Chapter VIII.

---

<sup>13</sup> Under the Whistleblower Protection Policy, this includes also former WFP employees.

56. In cases involving retaliation, the Ethics Office may also make recommendations for interim measures as outlined in the Whistleblower Protection Policy. The Whistleblower Protection Policy also sets out additional accompanying preventive, interim and redress measures.
57. Any WFP employee concerned shall be informed of the envisaged duration of the interim protective measures. Interim protective measures such as alternative duties or reporting lines may extend in duration and become permanent.
58. Where an affected person considers that the alleged abusive conduct may have impacted their work performance, they are encouraged to discuss this with their supervisor, the Country or Regional Director, the HQ Divisional Director or Director, HRM, as appropriate, so that their circumstances may be considered for the applicable performance cycle.

**Data collection, monitoring and implementation**

59. WFP will collect data and information for monitoring and analysis of the organization's response to abusive conduct. An annual report, containing anonymized data is published by the Director, HRM on the practice of the Executive Director and delegated officials in disciplinary matters, including matters relating to abusive conduct. Anonymized data and information may also be disseminated internally or externally in other forms.
60. The Director, HRM has overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation effectiveness of this Circular and proposing appropriate revisions to it.
61. This Circular takes effect immediately.

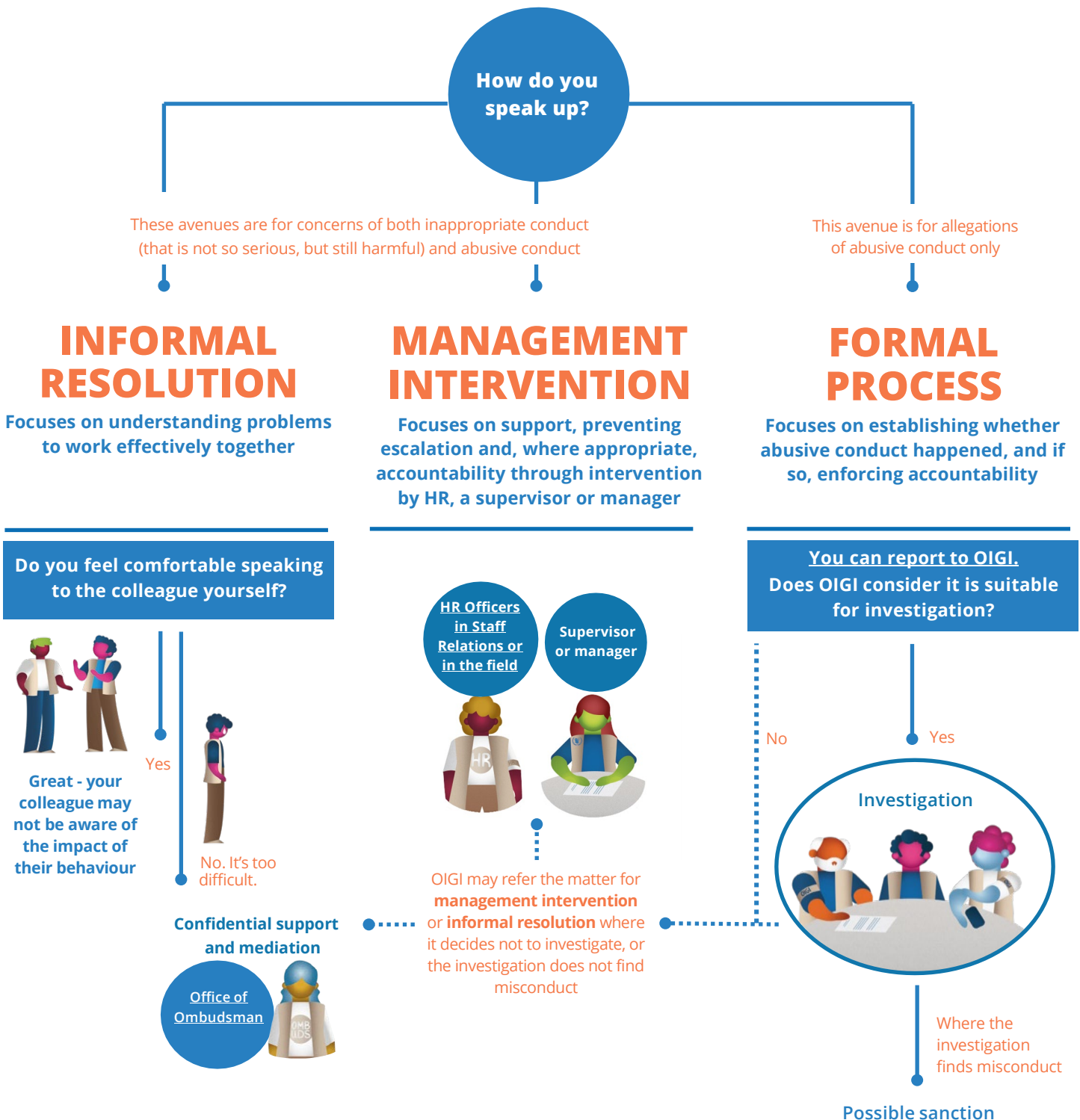
David M. Beasley  
Executive Director

# HOW DO YOU SPEAK UP?

## There are three different avenues

You feel that your colleague may be behaving inappropriately or even abusively. It may be affecting you or someone else in the team. How do you speak up?

The flow chart below will give you more information on the **three** avenues for speaking up when a problem arises. No matter how you speak up, measures can be taken to protect and support you.



## Annex II

### TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE INTERDISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE (IC)

1. Acknowledging the interconnectedness of the abusive conduct prevention and response activities of its members, the purpose of the Interdisciplinary Committee ("Committee", formerly known as Inter-divisional Standing Committee)<sup>14</sup> is, where appropriate, to coordinate efforts to promote respectful, diverse and inclusive workplaces for all WFP employees.
2. In particular, the Committee reviews, in a confidential manner, matters brought to its attention by its members and considers what actions may be necessary to safeguard the safety, security and wellbeing of the parties involved and the interests of WFP. This could include interim measures and recommendations to the relevant decision-makers.
3. The Committee may recommend to relevant stakeholders policy initiatives relevant to the mandates of its members, including those related to respectful workplace, internal justice and conflict resolution.
4. The Committee is not a channel for the reporting of allegations of abusive conduct. It only reviews such matters which are brought to its attention by any of its members and deemed to warrant the Committee's attention by its members, noting each member's respective confidentiality obligations.

#### Composition and procedures

5. The meetings of the Committee will usually be attended by the following members: Director, HRM; Inspector General; General Counsel; Director, Ethics Office; and Ombudsman. Members may not delegate other officials to attend the Committee meetings on their behalf, unless on an exceptional basis and with the Chairperson's prior approval.
6. The Director, Human Resources Division (HRM) will regularly convene and chair meetings of the Committee and, for urgent matters, will convene ad hoc meetings on short notice or consult with the relevant Committee members verbally or in writing.
7. The Assistant Executive Director, Workplace Culture, may occasionally convene and chair meetings of the Committee, normally in advance of each Executive Board session. Such meetings would focus on lessons learnt, best practices and policy initiatives.
8. The Chairperson may request other senior managers or subject matter experts (for example, from Regional Bureaux; Wellness Division; Gender Office; Security Division) to provide information or participate in meetings, as deemed necessary by the Committee.
9. In case of a conflict of interest (actual, perceived or potential) in relation to a matter coming to the attention of the Committee, the concerned attendee(s) will recuse themselves from the relevant Committee discussion.
10. To ensure timely and effective action and confidentiality, the Committee's formal procedural requirements will be kept to a minimum. Written records will be limited to action points, when appropriate, and recommendations to decision-makers and/or senior management.
11. The Committee will assess its own functioning twice per year, regarding its effectiveness, cohesion and alignment of actions with its mandate.

---

<sup>14</sup> The Inter-divisional Standing Committee was established under the Policy on protection from harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority, and discrimination (Executive Director's Circular OED2018/007, 1 March 2018) at Director's level to advise the Executive Director, as and when appropriate, on addressing abusive conduct and to promote the prevention of and prompt response to abusive conduct.

## Annex III

### AVENUES FOR SPEAKING UP AND OBTAINING SUPPORT AT WFP

The functions below may be reached through multiple possible channels, including by email, telephone or, where available, in person. Their contact information is available below and on WFPgo.

In case of physical harm, employees are strongly encouraged to seek immediate medical attention and may contact the Critical Incident Management Hotline, which operates 24/7, at VSAT 1301- 3333 or +39-06-6513-3333.

## AVENUES FOR SPEAKING UP

### Informal Resolution

**Office of the  
Ombudsman and  
Mediation Services  
(OBD)**  
[ombudsman@wfp.org](mailto:ombudsman@wfp.org)

- Support and information on the avenues for speaking up as well as the support available.
- Confidential support in addressing possible inappropriate and abusive conduct through informal resolution.
- Confidential conversations with WFP employees on resolution strategies.
- Neutral facilitation and mediation services to help willing parties resolve workplace problems.

### Management Intervention

**Managers or  
supervisors**

- Advice on the avenues for speaking up as well as the support available.
- Addressing concerns of inappropriate and abusive conduct through management intervention, including by cautioning and through performance management.

**HRM Staff Relations**  
[hq.staffrelations@wfp.org](mailto:hq.staffrelations@wfp.org)

- Advice on the avenues for speaking up as well as the support available.
- Supporting in addressing possible inappropriate and abusive conduct through management intervention, including by cautioning and supporting managers with performance management.
- Information on possible protective measures.

**Human Resources (HR)  
officers at the regional  
and country levels**

- Advice on the avenues for speaking up as well as the support available.
- Supporting in addressing possible inappropriate and abusive conduct through management intervention, including by cautioning and supporting managers with performance management.

### Formal Reporting

**Office of Inspections and  
Investigations (OIGI)**  
[hotline@wfp.org](mailto:hotline@wfp.org)  
<http://wfpHotline.ethicspoint.com/>

- Receipt of formal reports of possible abusive conduct.
- Based on a preliminary assessment, may conduct a formal investigation into allegations of abusive conduct.
- The findings of an investigation may lead to a disciplinary process or review.

## SUPPORT MECHANISMS

### Staff Counselling Service (WELC)

<https://newgo.wfp.org/how-do-i-talk-to-a-staff-counsellor>

- Confidential emotional and psychological support to WFP employees, dependents and former staff members.
- Guidance on conflict resolution techniques.
- Information on the avenues for speaking up as well as the support available.

### Medical Service (WELM)

[medical@wfp.org](mailto:medical@wfp.org)  
[hq.medicalreception@wfp.org](mailto:hq.medicalreception@wfp.org)

- Medical support including in connection with work-related grievances.

### Ethics Office (ETO)

General queries:  
[WFP.Ethics@wfp.org](mailto:WFP.Ethics@wfp.org)  
Protection against retaliation requests:  
[global.etopar@wfp.org](mailto:global.etopar@wfp.org)

- Support in protection against retaliation matters under the Whistleblower Protection Policy.
- Information on the avenues for speaking up as well as the support available.

### Security

[WFP.security@wfp.org](mailto:WFP.security@wfp.org)

- Immediate assistance for safety and physical security.
- Support and advice on security considerations throughout the resolution of grievances.

### Staff Representative Bodies (SRB)

Professional Staff Association:  
[WFP.PSA@wfp.org](mailto:WFP.PSA@wfp.org)  
Union of General Service Staff:  
[ugss@wfp.org](mailto:ugss@wfp.org)

- Information and advice on the avenues for speaking up as well as the support available.
- Support when pursuing informal resolution or the formal process, as well as in management intervention, as appropriate.

### Respectful Workplace Advisors (RWAs)

<https://newgo.wfp.org/documents/list-of-respectful-workplace-advisors-rwas>

- Extension of OBD's services in the field.
- Support to diffuse workplace tensions and to facilitate conflict resolution in a neutral and confidential manner.